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A

MODERN PRODIGAL.

BY

JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT,

AUTHOR OF "THE CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN," "FRU DAGMAR'S SON,"
"THE STORY OF RASMUS," "A MADE MAN," ETC.

"The fall thou darest to despise,
May be the angels' slackened hand
Has suffered it, that he may rise,
And take a firmer, surer stand,
Or trusting less to earthly things,
May henceforth learn to use his wings.

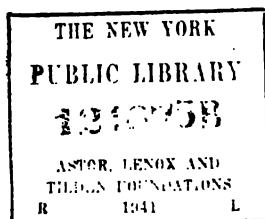
"And judge none lost, but wait and see
With hopeful pity, not disdain,
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain,
And love and glory, that may raise
This soul to God in after-days."

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A MODERN PRODIGAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED.

THE trial was ended. Mid-afternoon had passed. The jury by their foreman had returned their verdict. The judge, with slow emphasis, pronounced the sentence—"Ten years in the penitentiary." Standing, his eyes fixed upon the judge, the prisoner, Thomas Stanhope, heard.

During the weeks of his imprisonment the ominous red flush had faded from his face, his big figure had lost its tremulousness, his eyes their wavering lurid light. Exorcised for the time of his demon drunkenness by the firm hand of the law, clothed and in his right mind, he heard his doom, which every one of his fellow-townsmen, standing in the Ladbury court-room, received as just and merited.

The sheriff approached to lead away the pris-

oner. Then Thomas Stanhope, for the first time during the trial, spoke: "Judge, I want to say something." As the judge did not reply, and the sheriff laid his hand on his arm, Stanhope cried out in an agony of entreaty: "Judge! Harry Noble! let me speak!"

It may have been among the dreams of Harry Noble's early ambition that he should reach the bench, one of the youngest judges in the country, but nothing had foreshadowed to him that almost his first official act must be to pronounce so hard a sentence on a companion of his boyhood, or that a prisoner at the bar should entreat him as "Harry Noble."

The words were as a spell to conjure with. Swifter than light, memory carried him back to those early days when a young student from the Latin school, or from college, he came back to this, his native place, greeted by none with more enthusiastic devotion than by Thomas Stanhope, a lithe little lad, who looked up to him as to a demi-god. On what fishing or hunting excursions had this faithful henchman carried his bag or his gun! How had he built the fire for their noon-day bivouac, and listened with admiring awe to his tales of college life!

This vision of the past was instantaneous; the judge bent his head, the prisoner swept one look about the thronged court-room and spoke:

"I don't find fault with my sentence, judge, it is just. I have heard all that the witnesses said, I know them, they are not men to lie. No doubt they told the truth, and if they did tell the truth, all I can say is the sentence should have been for life; I am not fit to be free!"

At these words a little stir, a deep drawn breath, passed through the court-room, and then a profound silence, as the prisoner went on.

"You know me, you knew my family before me, most of you—we were as good a family and creditable as any in Ladbury. Who would have thought when I was a little boy playing in these streets, that I, Thomas Stanhope, would become a house-breaker; that I would break into my neighbor's house, plunder his goods, fire on him with intent to kill—as far as I had any intent at all, for I did not know what I was doing? I have no recollection of what I did. It was not I, but the devil to which I have given room. I am like that man I used to read about in the Bible, exceeding fierce and living among the tombs, that

none could bind, even with chains, and the devils in him were legion. He, as I recollect, found Some One to cast out his devils; I never did. I have wanted to reform! I have hated myself, I have cursed my folly, I have tried, I have vowed on my knees, but wherever I went there the demon was free. I saw it, I smelled it, I always fell before it. You know me—I have been more demon than man. The law, judge, gives me only one safe place—a prison. Because a prison is the only place the law keeps free and clear of that whiskey devil. I tell you, now that I am sober and have been sober for weeks, I had rather spend all the rest of my days a prisoner, but in possession of myself, than free and in possession of a demon! But I didn't get up to speak about myself, I have a word to say about —them—my family—up on the mountain there —Mercy and the children. You think I do not care for them. I have acted as if I did not. I have neglected them, abused them, robbed them, left them to starve—they would not have a roof over their heads to-day, if I could have either sold or mortgaged that place up there! No one knows better than I do how bad I've been to them—a demon instead of husband and father,

but—I do care for them when I am in my right mind. Now I am going away, forever I suppose, and what I want to say is—don't hate and despise Mercy and the children. Give them a fair chance, as I never did. Don't be hard on them because Thomas Stanhope is a miserable drunkard, housebreaker, felon! There's good stuff in those children, they take after Mercy, and the Stanhopes that were my forebears. Forget that those children belong to Thomas Stanhope, the convict—remember that they are good old Deacon Stanhope's grandchildren! They are well off, rid of me, but oh, neighbors—you I played with as a boy—lend a hand to Mercy and the children! Judge! Harry! don't you remember Mercy the first day she went to school?"

Judge Noble sat, his head bent, his eyes fixed on the floor. He was a tender-hearted man, a husband and a father; he dared not lift his eyes, or give any sign in answer to this challenge, lest he could no longer command the emotions surging through his soul. Memory, swift as an electric flash, swept him from the hushed excitement of the court-room to the old red school-house at the mountain's foot, and he saw again little Mercy Titus, with her hair of ruddy gold, much younger

than the boy Harry Noble, and not in his classes, but a master-hand at the varied intricacies of English spelling. How often he had seen her marching proudly to the head of her class! On Friday afternoons when all the school were put into one class to "spell down" how often he and Thomas Stanhope, and little Mercy Titus, with the red gold in her hair, had stood alone at last, valiantly combating for victory, until the shadows fell and the teacher closed the contest, the three standing still. And later, years later, how often had he seen, side by side, darkly outlined against the evening sky as they walked together, young lovers, Mercy — now a wan weeping woman in yon hill-top hut—and Thomas Stanhope, sentenced to "ten years in the penitentiary."

O Mercy! Little Mercy Titus! what grateful eyes were yours, when the big boy helped you through a snow-drift, or over a rain-flushed brook! How sweet your voice sending its childish clear soprano high above the rest in the school songs.

These visions swept at one swift flash through the enchanted mirror of memory, during that moment while the prisoner paused to recover self-

control, as he too had evoked before his mind his lost youth.

"Judge, if you have a chance to say a good word to them, or do them a good turn, forget me—think only of Mercy—and do it. Neighbors, you who used to be friends and playmates, be better than I have been to the wife and children. I pulled them down with me. You help them up, and if you hate me so you can't help them, let them alone, don't give them kicks and curses on my account!"

He turned, and stepped from the prisoner's box beside the sheriff. The crowd in the court-room openly wiped their eyes, and blew sonorous blasts through their noses. One and another, as the convict came down the aisle, held out a hand to clasp his, or touched him on the shoulder, saying, "Bear up," "It might have been worse," "You might have killed Andrews." "Don't fret for the folks," "They'll get on," "We'll do well by them."

At the court-house door the prisoner for the first time lifted his eyes. Towering above Ladbury was the mountain, now, in the early spring, covered with a red and purple mist of the budding maple and birch. There on one of the level

reaches was the home he had destroyed—were Mercy and the children! There on that mountain he had spent his boyish holidays in innocent sport. O Nature! mother Nature, why had he wandered from thy side? O hard and shameful years, down which he had come, recreant to every duty and every vow, since on that mountain one summer evening, long ago, he had asked Mercy to be his wife! He gave one deep sob. The sheriff looked keenly at him as he led him into the corridor where was the cell, where only he had had opportunity to come to himself.

.

Perhaps it was as well that the prisoner could not see what was enacting up on the mountain. His heart was full, his burden like Cain's was already greater than he could bear. True, like Cain, he had made his own burden, but, oh, sirs, that does not make it the lighter!

Up on the mountain was a house, with three rooms below, and two under the eaves in the attic. It had been built with a good old-fashioned honest workmanship, which caused it still to stand squarely erect with a solid roof and level floors, through years of shameful neglect. There had been a porch once, looking toward the town

and the sunset; it had been torn away. Most of the fence pickets had been also used for firewood. When on winter nights a woman hears her children cry with cold, she may make a raid, in their behalf, on her own fence pickets or front porch, although by nature a thrifty housewife. The windows of this house were badly broken. Some of the damaged panes had been pasted up, some empty spaces had been filled with shingle or pasteboard.

Around the house certain apple, cherry, and pear trees, which had survived the general misfortunes of the place, were breaking into a flourish of white and pink bloom. Paint was wanting to the house, and weeds contended with the grass in the yard. Dock and plantain striving with unaided grass have about the same fortunes as evil habits warring with native good instincts unassisted in a soul. In this fallen world the weed, vegetable or moral, has much the better chance.

This house on the mountain looked uninhabited; the door swung open, the windows were curtainless, not a hen clucked and scratched, not a bee boomed in the sunshine about it.

Still, lending a careful ear in the Spring stillness of the mountain side, now and then a sound

might be caught as coming from behind a broken-down barn at some distance from the house, and a little higher up. Following this hint of life we pass behind the barn, and there, in a little yard with an unused water-trough fed by a hill-side spring, a yard bare and desolate, and partly surrounded by a broken-down rail fence, we find four children. On the end of the trough, idly plashing the water with her hand, sits Letitia, her perplexed and melancholy face belying the name given by an over-sanguine mother. Letitia is twelve, neatly combed, clean, and patched, and barefooted, her uncovered feet and ankles ever trying to hide themselves under her woefully short and scanty skirts. Perched on the fence is Samuel, aged six. Samuel of old, we are informed, had a new coat every year. This Samuel, though his mother's will was good enough, had never had a new coat. At present its place was supplied by a shirt-waist with only one sleeve and rent down the back, and a pair of trousers with very little material left in either knees or seat. Samuel's head, above this assemblage of rags, showed the brow of a philosopher and the smile of a saint.

Accommodated on a little box for a stool was

Patty—abbreviated from Patience—who had spent three years in this wicked world, looked frightened nearly out of her wits, and had found already ample opportunity for the exercise of the quality suggested by her name.

These three children were gravely looking at an exhibition. The Exhibitor was their eldest brother, age thirteen—Achilles, called Kill for short. Nature had sent two more children to occupy the place between Letitia and Samuel, but fate had proved too hard for them, and two little graves without stones were now all that suggested their existence; thus Achilles was robbed of two more admiring spectators of his exhibition. He was walking around on one leg and one arm, and carrying the other leg and arm aloft, like the antennæ of an insect.

Suddenly he stopped to rest and besought Letitia to look down the road and see if anything was coming. Letitia looked and reported the road vacant as far as she could see it.

“Don’t you s’pose they’re done long ago?” demanded Achilles. “He did it, and they knew he did it. They won’t let him off, will they? If I see him coming up the road I’ll run, and never, never come back!”

"And leave mother?" said Letitia reproachfully.

"No, I can't leave mother. I say, Letitia, they won't let him out, will they? They can't! Why they ought to give him a lifer! If I was Judge Noble I'd shut him up in the jug for life, so I would!"

"O Kill, don't!" said Letitia. "He's your father."

"And I wish he wasn't my father! I don't want such a father! What kind of a father has he been? Did he ever give us clothes or presents or good things? Didn't he swear and rage and kick and cuff? Didn't he hunt us out of the house up into the mountain, night after night? I say, Tish, how often did mother and we all hide here in the barn freezing last winter, while he was ripping and tearing and breaking things in the house? Do you want to try that again? I don't."

"Maybe he'd be good—now he's been to jail," vouchsafed the philosophic Samuel.

"Maybe he wouldn't," retorted the wrathful Achilles, "he don't know how to be good. He'd need more'n six weeks in jail to settle him."

"I think mother'd feel awful if he went to the

penitentiary," suggested Letitia, with womanly instinct.

"Mother wouldn't be so foolish," declared her brother. "What good does he do mother? Hasn't he said he'd kill us all? Won't he do it some time? If Judge Noble lets him off, I mean to go down there and tell him we'll all be murdered up here, and it will be his fault. I say, what good did he ever do mother? Didn't he sell every nice thing she ever had? Don't he take away all she earns? Wouldn't she have some peace of her life if he was gone for good? If he comes back I'll get a big rope the first time he gets dead drunk, and I'll pull him out here to the barn, and tie him hand and foot, and keep him here tied forever."

"He'd holler," said Samuel, the practical.

"I'd gag him so he couldn't. I'd give him a blanket, and I'd feed him—some."

"He won't come back. Folks say he's sure of the penitentiary," said Letitia, in a dull, despairing tone.

"If they'll only keep him there till I grow to be a man," said Achilles, "it would be all right. I'll be strong and big as he is, and I'd see to it that he behaves. He shouldn't hurt a hair of

any one of us. I'd take care of you all. You should have shoes, Tish; I'd buy you breeches, Samuel."

"It must be awful to be in the penitentiary, though," said Letitia, with a woman's relentings.

"Not half so awful as he deserves," said her brother stoutly. "Didn't he break up our bedstead, and sell our cow, and give our pig to the saloon man, and carry off all the hens to trade for rum; and he sold my steer that I earned my own self and took care of, and was going to buy us clothes and a blanket with him, and he sold him for rum, and came home and turned us all out. He ought to go to the penitentiary forever; he sold my steer!"

Now this steer was the Patroclus of the modern Achilles. Letitia was silent, evidently not fully approving; Samuel looked like a pitying angel; the exhibition failed to attract, and Achilles sought for an ally. Little Patience had sat silent, to her he appealed. "You don't want father to come, do you, Patty?"

Patience lifted up her voice and wept.

"Never mind," said Achilles, "he shan't come, he shall go to jail. He shan't scare you any more, Patty!"

As Patience caught her breath and relapsed into her usual silence, the strained ears of the children caught the sound of horse's feet coming up the road. The horseman, a rough mountaineer, did not see the four anxious child-faces peering around the corner of the old barn. "Hi there! Mis' Stanhope!" shouted the rider, stopping by the crazy stile that gave entrance to the yard. "Hullo! the house!" There was no answer. Not that the house was empty. Within, in that desolation which should have been a happy home, sat Mercy Stanhope, rocking herself to and fro in wordless anguish, her old blue check apron flung over her head. A ripple of wind through the house whisked forth one corner of the apron, and waved it as a flag of distress. The man on horseback, craning his neck to look in at the open door, saw the fluttering rag; from that apron corner he divined Mercy within ear-shot. "Hullo there, Mis' Stanhope!" he howled. "Trial's over, an' your man's got ten years!"

Ten years fell the knell on Mercy Stanhope's heart. She need not tremble now at his home-coming, she need not cower under fear of a maniac with murder in his soul. Ten years, ten years of silence, of calm, of safety—at what a

price! Ten years in the penitentiary, ten years a prisoner! The woman and the wife in her forgot her wrongs, thought only of his shame, his misery, his doom. Ten years! the playmate of her childhood, the lover of her youth, the husband of her choice—ten years in the penitentiary! Mercy rocked to and fro, and wrung her hands, and wept aloud.

The delegation at the barn corner heard the news. Achilles caught up Patty and hugged her.

“He’ll never scare you again, Patty. No more father, no more father for you, Patty. Do you hear, Samuel? Ten years! We’ve got our chance! I’ll be a man when he comes back, big enough to stand up for you.” And the four barefooted ones rushed off to congratulate mother. But Letitia’s steps were slowest—she dimly guessed that congratulations were not in order.

CHAPTER II.

FRIEND AMOS LOWELL.

ACHILLES, fleet of foot, passed through more than one mental change in that short run from the barn to the house. The incubus which had weighed on his life was gone. He drew the deep breath of freedom; hope and ambition took possession of him. On him now rested the care of the family; how much he would do for them! Wrath and satisfied vengeance against his father gave way to tenderest devotion to his mother. And now his feet touched the threshold, and there was his mother in an agony of weeping! Not that Achilles had never seen her weeping before; tears rather than smiles had been Mercy Stanhope's portion since her children knew her.

Achilles could not realize how hard it is for middle-age and long disappointment to react toward hope. He knew nothing of that wealth of woman's love, faithful unto death. He had vaguely expected to find his mother, like himself,

rebounding from fear, and already arising to renovate her household. The six weeks since his father's arrest had been weeks of penury, of cold, of storm, of scanty comfort, but they had been weeks of domestic peace. Achilles had spent them largely in planning what he would do if his father received a long sentence. He had said little, but he met this hour forewarned and forearmed.

He went up to his mother, and stroking her hair with his rough grimy hand, he said: "We're all right now, mother. Don't you cry. I'll take care of you! We'll have ten years all to ourselves, now, and that's an awful long time. When it's done, I'll be a big man, and little Patty will be as old as I am now, and Tish will be as old as you were when you were married, and Samuel will be most grown up; and father can't touch one of us if he comes back, and he shan't touch you. Don't cry, mother, don't ever cry any more. You can laugh all the time now, if you only will. Oh, I'm going to do so much for you! I'll make a garden and a fence, and build a new porch, and plant trees and flowers and bushes; and I'll build the barn over, and we'll have pigs and chickens and a cow, and a horse and wagon.

I'll fix up the house as nice as Mrs. Lyman's, and you shall have a new dress and bonnet. You just wait and see what I can do. I've got it all planned."

"If you can do so much," said the astute Samuel, "why didn't you do it before?"

"What was the good? He'd have spoiled it all. Didn't I make a garden, and he sold all the things out of it? Didn't I earn chickens and a pig and a steer, and he took them all away? What's the good gettin' things to be smashed? Now I've got some chance to do things."

But Letitia had placed herself on the other side of her mother, and clasping her arms about her, proffered consolation in a different fashion.

"You've got us, mother, we love you. We'll help you. Here's little Patty crying because you are crying. Ten years isn't so very long. Yesterday Mrs. Lyman said she'd been married ten years, and it seemed only a few days. And you know he was always good when he was sober, and now he'll be sober all the time. I know he will think of us all, and be sorry; perhaps he'll come back good!"

"He don't get in here unless he is good, sure enough," said Achilles. "I'll be a man, and

can keep him out. I shall have a nice home here, and nice things for mother, and you just better believe I won't let him come in and spoil it all."

"Achilles," moaned his mother from behind her apron, "he is your father."

"He never did us any good, if he is our father," said Achilles.

"Yes he did," said Samuel, "he made us all hate whiskey, seeing how bad it made him. Teacher says it's a good thing to learn to hate whiskey."

"Poor mother," said Letitia, still petting her parent. "You have had such a hard time! Don't you wish you had stayed with Uncle Barum, and never got married?"

Oh, days of peace and plenty with Uncle Barum! How tranquilly the years of her life might have flowed on, in the pretty farm-house on the other side of the mountain. But then, love of her children tugged at her heart-strings. She dropped her apron and clasped her arms about the clinging four. "If I had stayed there with Uncle Barum, I would not have had you," she said.

"We'll make you glad you've got us," said Achilles firmly. "We'll be better to you than ten

Uncle Barums, or fathers, either. You'll see good things now, mother, if you'll just quit crying and chirk up, and we'll all lend a hand together. With us all to build up, and nobody to tear down, we can get on."

Letitia picked up Patty and placed her on her mother's lap. Mrs. Stanhope looked into the strong, homely face of her big rough boy, and to her it seemed noble and beautiful, so did it shine with honest, faithful love. The very intensity of this lad's seemingly unfilial vengeance toward his father was but the product of his sympathy and affection for his unfortunate mother.

Achilles, in all the ardor of new hopes, longed at once to be up and doing. The cold, lingering March had passed away. These warm, bright April days had marshalled the hosts of the spring-time. During the weeks since his father had been arrested, Achilles had felt that he could not make efforts which perhaps would be frustrated, and only yield supplies toward fostering the family curse, if his father returned. Now he longed to carry out with a rush all that he had planned. Why was the sun so near the horizon, why must night come when no man can work? Still, stroking his mother's head, and

standing near her, because he vaguely felt that his presence consoled her, Achilles looked out of the open door, and saw another horseman coming slowly up the mountain road.

A drab coat with a wide collar, immaculate shirt-front, iron-gray hair falling under a very wide-brimmed hat; Achilles knew him, and the large, deliberate beast which carried him. Bay Betty and Friend Amos Lowell—they were seldom seen apart on the high-roads.

Bay Betty might be freely pardoned for her deliberate pace, as she was burdened, not only with her grave and portly rider, but with a curious amount of luggage. On each arm Friend Amos Lowell carried a large splint basket: behind him, well wrapped in brown paper, was a huge bundle: before him was another bundle, rising as high as the mare's ears. As Achilles watched him with a boy's ready curiosity about all that is passing, Friend Amos rode close to the rickety stile, and began to unload himself and his mare. Achilles at once darted out to help; he concluded that Friend Amos, the chief merchant in the village, was taking home goods, and that something had gone wrong with Bay Betty. Achilles knew that Friend Amos cherished a myth that

Bay Betty was a very spirited beast, and needed the most judicious guidance and control to prevent her from caracoling like a Paladin's war steed.

"Don't get off, Mr. Lowell," cried Achilles. "I'll help you. Is the bridle wrong? or has she cast a shoe?"

"All is right with the beast," said Friend Amos, "but I am coming into the house. My name is Amos Lowell, and thee need give me no vain title of 'Mister,' which does not become me. I wish to see thy mother." He had now laid the two baskets and one bundle on the stile, and was looking for a footing for himself. Achilles promptly put the baskets on the ground, and exhorted his guest not to be afraid of the stile, it was stronger than it looked, and would bear. He then followed the visitor to the house, cherishing serious and secret suspicions that he had come to ask payment of some debt contracted by his father.

"But he can't get what we haven't got," said Achilles, "and we haven't a cent but the dollar I've buried under the water trough."

His shrewd sense told him to treat the possible creditor with courtesy, and seizing the only really

firm chair in the room, he placed it for him, saying, "Mother! here's a gentleman." Friend Amos Lowell shook hands with Mercy, and patted Patience on the head before he sat down.

"Mercy Stanhope," he said, in his round, measured tones, "to-day is for thee a day of tribulation and reproach. But thee knows, Mercy, that there is One who can make the valley of Baca a well, and Achor a door of hope, and thee mayst sing there as in the days of thy youth. Thee knows that sorrow does not spring out of the ground, nor affliction rise out of the dust; but the blessed Lord is able to make the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder He will restrain. These afflictions seem grievous to be borne, but afterward they may yield thee the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Thee knows, Mercy, that chastisement is sometimes greatest kindness, and herein God deals with us as with children and sons. It seems to me, Mercy, that the goodness of God, which endures continually, is already to be seen in Thomas Stanhope. This afternoon, when he received sentence, he rose up and spoke words that went to the hearts of all that heard him. He did not complain of his sentence. He said it was just, and that he had

rather spend the remainder of his days in prison, where his mind could be kept clear from the poison of strong drink, than to go free and conduct himself like a demon, as in the past. So, Mercy, it seems to me and thee that God is already bringing Thomas Stanhope to his better self. But it was when Thomas spoke of thee and the children that our hearts were stirred. He begged all that heard him not to neglect and despise thee and the little ones, for his sake. He said he had been most bad and cruel, and that thee and the children were innocent and deserving. He asked all to lend thee and the little family a helping hand. Now thee is free of him he hoped thee would enter into a time of peace, and find that comfort his evil course has denied thee. Thee knows, Mercy, that in Ladbury people know Thomas Stanhope and his godly forebears, and there are those that have grieved to see Thomas wander out of the way. But, Mercy, prayers are not made in vain, and there are prayers for Thomas Stanhope lying yet unanswered before the throne of God. The Lord will answer them in His own good time. Thee knows, too, Mercy, that all here have known thee from a child; thee has their pity in thy troubles, and the hand of

help will be held out to thee. Even if Thomas Stanhope had not pleaded for thee and the children with tears, our hearts would not have been hard to thee and thine. Thee has four brave children here, Mercy; the good Lord grant that they may be as olive plants about thy table. With industry and economy thee may build again thy ruined house."

"We are going to build it," spoke out Samuel, taking the remark in its most literal sense. "Kill's going to build it, and I am going to help him."

Friend Amos Lowell looked at Achilles, who had returned to his mother's side. The boy's eyes flashed.

"Now that work will do any good," he said, "I'm going to work like a tiger cat. I have worked, but he always sold and smashed everything. Now there's some sense trying, I'm going to begin to-morrow morning. I'll mend the fence, and make a garden, and clean up the yard, and plant things."

"Thee is right," said Friend Amos. "'Doe the next thyng' is a brave proverb of our forebears. Begin with what lies next at hand, and by patient continuance in well-doing thee shall

reap if thee faint not. Mercy Stanhope, thy mother and the parents of Thomas Stanhope were godly people, though not of the Quaker persuasion; but the Father in Heaven knows his children by many names. Thee is about to reconstitute thy household. Thee must do it in the fear of the Lord, and lay the cornerstone on prayer. Has thee a copy of God's word?"

"Yes," said Mercy, "it has been hidden for four years under the eaves in the room above, so that it should not be taken away."

"Thee will bring it down, Mercy, and read a portion to thy children, and kneel with them and ask the presence and blessing of the Lord God. Do so, Mercy, this night."

Mercy and her children were awed by this presentation of their duty and position. In some way these words seemed to give their hope a substantial background; old things seemed melting and fading away; terror, riot, cursing, were all passing out of their lives, and they were exhorted to zeal, labor, peace, prayer. Here was a new life indeed.

"I did not come to thee empty-handed, Mercy," said Friend Amos. "Out of the goodly compe-

tence the Lord has committed to me, in trust for Him, I have brought thee a portion for thy need to-day. Let the children go and bring in the two baskets and the bundles."

At the word away sped Achilles, Letitia, and Samuel to the stile and back again, loaded heavily, their faces all flushed with excitement and expectation.

"The little one in thy arms, Mercy," said Friend Amos, "is pale and sad of face. I see she has need of nourishing food, of warm garments, of toys, and of good cheer. It is not well to take a child from its mother, but if thee will lend her to me for a season, until thee has had time to make this sad and empty house a better shelter for so frail a little flower, my wife Sara and I will cherish her tenderly. We will return her to thee in a few weeks, able to laugh as a child should. Let me carry her to Sara to-night, Mercy, for her good. Thee and the others can then begin to work out the salvation of thy home, and whenever thee demands back thy babe, she shall come well plenished in clothes and playthings. Will thee come to me, my babe? The Lord denied me children, but I have a warm heart toward all little ones."

Patience resigned herself with a restful sigh to Friend Amos Lowell's strong arms.

"The babe has answered for herself," he said, taking a drab silk kerchief of soft and large dimensions from his pocket, and knotting it about her head and neck. "I have brought thee, Mercy, a few gifts, thee has repaid me double already, in lending me the little child. Thee shall shortly come in and see her, and thee will find she thrives."

So before she was aware Mercy found herself alone in the room with the baskets and bundles, while the three elder children attended to the stile Friend Amos, who carried little Patience in his arms.

"Go, comfort the mother," said Friend Amos, waving his hand to Letitia and Samuel, while Achilles stood on the stile holding Patience, that the deliberate old Quaker might commodiously seat himself on Bay Betty.

"I have a word for thee, my lad," said Friend Amos, "what is thy name?"

"Achilles."

"'Tis a heathenish name," said the Quaker with disapprobation, "but thee need not match it with heathen conduct. I see in thee a noble and manly spirit toward thy mother. Let me

tell thee, to-morrow morning at five o'clock the train leaves on which thy father goes to his long sentence in the penitentiary. His heart is sore, and full of bitter regrets for all the evil he has done to his family. I want thee, boy, to be at my house at half-past four, and I will go with thee to see thy father off, and to say a word of good cheer to him."

"I don't want to see him!" cried Achilles. "I don't want to bid him good-by, or say a word of cheer. He don't deserve it. I wish he had got twenty years, so he'd never come back to abuse mother. When he does come, though, I'll be grown up, and able to fight for them, and I'll do it, too. He sha'n't have it all his own way any more! Ten years is better than nothing."

"I grieve to see in thee an unforgiving, unfilial spirit," said Amos.

"You haven't lived here," retorted Achilles.

"It is true," said the gentle Friend, "and I am the less fitted to judge of thy provocation. But the good Lord is merciful to the merciful. Thy burden is great, so is thy mother's, but Thomas Stanhope has also a heavy load on his heart. The tears were in his eyes as he spoke of his ruined home. I want thee to come as I have

said. The day will be when thee will be glad thee heeded the counsels of age and experience. In the house thee will find clothes. Thee will not forget that cleanliness is a part of godliness, and that soap and water may be counted as a lesser means of grace. I shall be on the look-out for thee at half-past four."

This quiet insistance conquered Achilles. The boy felt that he was as sure to keep that tryst as the sun was to rise. He hugged little Patience and handed her over to Friend Amos, and his steps were hastened to the house by the joyful shouts of Samuel and Letitia.

The floor and table were covered with the treasures unpacked from baskets and bundles. Bread, cheese, sugar, tea, rice, bacon, a ham, potatoes, eggs, calico, white cotton, a box filled with thread, needles, buttons, scissors. These were some of the treasures. There was a roll of gingham, several yards of crash towelling, caps, shirt waists, a suit for Samuel, a suit that would fit Achilles, two bed-quilts. Fortune seemed to have emptied her best cornucopia.

There was such a bountiful and savory supper as had not been known in that house for years.

Letitia wished at once to begin cutting and sew-

ing, but her mother persuaded her to wait and begin the next day with a general house-cleaning, and thus have a nice place in which to sew. The sight of so many comforts had revived Mercy's housewifely instincts.

Mindful of Friend Amos Lowell's injunction, Mercy brought down her long-hidden Bible: then lighting a lamp, the children pressed about her as she indefinitely searched for a portion to read. Heaven guided her choice: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

CHAPTER III.

CONCERNING THE WRATH OF ACHILLES.

THE next morning, drawn by the command of the good Quaker as by an irresistible destiny, Achilles appeared at the house of Friend Amos Lowell at the appointed time. Achilles in his attic had risen early, washed carefully, dressed in his new clothes, and, carrying his shoes and stockings in his hand, had left the house unknown to any one and walked down the mountain, the three miles to the village. He put on his shoes and hose as he waited for Amos to come out.

The day was just breaking as they reached the station, where only one or two passengers besides the sheriff and his prisoner were waiting for the cars. Friend Amos approached Thomas Stanhope, and held out his hand.

"Thy words yesterday, Thomas, gave me hope for thee. When a man sees his errors and confesses that his punishment is just, when he begins

to take care for others, a good work is going on, in his soul. I have come to tell thee that Mercy and her children shall not lack a friend and a helper while Amos Lowell is spared by the good Lord."

Achilles meanwhile was gazing on his father from behind the shadow of the portly Amos. Here was a new father. His clothes were clean and well mended. He was washed and closely shaven. The fiery glow of alcohol had faded from his eyes and skin, and his features, thinned a little by abstinence and anxiety, had returned to something of their natural refinement. Prisoner as he was, he held himself more erect and had a firmer glance than when he shambled along half-drunk, the crouching bondsman of alcohol.

"Friend Lowell," he said, "I deserve what I have got, and I ask nothing for myself. But help them to get work—and oh! if you have any influence here in Ladbury, close those saloons which have been my ruin before my two boys get old enough to go the evil way I have gone!"

"I and certain others whose hearts the Lord hath touched," replied Amos, "do daily fight this traffic. Whether or not we can drive out these

saloons I cannot tell, but by God's help we will keep thy boys out of them. Poverty and the necessity of hard labor keep, by God's blessing, many a boy from mischief. When man became a sinner, the good Lord gave him a blessing in labor. If Deacon Stanhope had left thee his good name and example and not a dime, he might have had a more worthy successor. Thomas, I have brought thy son to bid thee farewell."

He stepped aside, and Thomas stared blankly at Achilles as at a stranger. It was not that the boy, thus put face to face with him, looked suspicious, defiant, belligerent; for years Thomas Stanhope's actions had been of such a nature that Achilles could show to him no more pleasing expression. The lad's nature was sturdy and warlike; there was more iron than clay in his make-up. What was curious to Stanhope was that for the first time for years he saw his son in new shoes and new cap, a tidy suit, a necktie, a percale shirt, and scoured to the unblemished cleanliness of his Quaker protector.

It came to Stanhope that this eminent respectability might have been the normal condition of Achilles but for him. He suddenly remembered a day when he had come with his own

father, the good deacon, to this station, to start on a pleasure trip to Philadelphia. He had then been about the age that Achilles had now reached. Good fare, good clothes, had been his birthright. What a happy, innocent, frank-faced boy he had been, holding by his father's hand, so trustful and fond of such a good father! And here—here was his son, clothed by a stranger's care, defiant, wrath brooding in his soul, come to see his father carried off to serve out a ten-years' sentence! His lips trembled, there was a sob in his voice, as he held out his hand to his deeply injured son and said, "Achilles! my boy!"

Achilles was not one to be placated by a tear, or to forget ten cruel years in five minutes. He took his father's hand, but without cordiality.

"How are they?" asked the prisoner.

"Better off than they've been this good while," said Achilles. Stanhope winced.

"You'll be good to the mother and the children, my boy."

"I'll be better than you have, by a long shot," said the son.

Stanhope turned paler at this home-thrust. "I've been very bad. You're better without me. I'm going for a long time, Achilles."

"None too long," retorted Achilles. "When you come back I will be a man, as big as you are, and the rest of 'em will be grown up. You'll find you can't carry on up at our house any more the way you have. I'll have a good place for mother by that time, and she is going to have some peace and quiet in it."

"I hope so—she needs it," said the humbled father. "I have thrown away my chance in life and ruined you all. I shall never come back to trouble you. Build up the home I destroyed, Achilles, and be all I have not been and nothing that I have. I suppose your mother and Letitia are glad to be rid of me too?"

"Oh, they cried like everything; women are so dreadful soft-hearted and don't know what's good for 'em; but of course they'd be scared enough to see you back."

The train whistled. The sheriff touched the prisoner's arm.

"Good-by, Achilles, my boy," said Thomas. "Forgive me if you can and ask them to; don't think harder of me than you can help. I'd have been a good father if it hadn't been for drink."

"What did you drink for when you knew how it made you act?" said the obdurate Achilles.

The second whistle blew. "All aboard!" cried the conductor. Thomas suddenly clasped his son in his arms and kissed him. Then leaving the astounded lad on the platform, he entered the car before the sheriff. Achilles stood dazed for a moment, then ran along by the car window, where he could see his father, and shouted: "Good-by, father! I'll give 'em your love! Don't fret. I'll take care of 'em. We'll be all right now!" To the sound of which assurance, which might have a double meaning, the train rolled out of the station. Achilles looked after it.

"There," he said to Friend Amos, "you wanted me to come say good-by, and I did it."

"Thee has not a very soft heart," said the Quaker quietly, "and I conclude thee has a hard head. I could bid the prisoner good-by more kindly."

"Good reason why. He never treated you to brickbats and kicks, nor scared your little sister, nor chased your mother out into the rain, nor sold your steer."

"Thee will come to breakfast with me, Achilles," said Friend Amos, trusting rather to time than to argument to soften the rancor of the injured lad.

At the Quaker's door was Friend Sara Lowell, with little Patty in her arms. Patty, washed and curled, clad in a new pink dress and white apron from the ample supplies in Friend Lowell's big country-town store, roused up to give a smile to her brother. Both Achilles and Patty ate heartily of the ample breakfast set forth by Friend Sara Lowell, one of the most notable housewives of the village. After breakfast, Friend Amos took them into his adjoining store and gave Patty a little red cart, a doll, a woolly dog, and a stick of candy. Upon Achilles he bestowed a rake and a hoe.

"This is as much as thee can carry three miles up the hill," he said. "Friend Jacob Lyman is not far from thee. He will give thee seed potatoes, and cabbage and tomato plants, and lend thee a spade. Get the garden made betimes, and let me see at the end of two or three weeks what thee has done to better affairs. Thee is not slow to promise what thee will do; let us see if thee will be equally good at performing."

It was six o'clock, and the sun was well up, drinking the dews of the April morning. The grass was green on the roadside; the chickweed and shepherd's purse were in blossom. As

Achilles, full of hope, sped along, his rake over one shoulder, the hoe over the other, he counted every moment lost until he could begin to work in his long-neglected garden and tell his mother of the happy fortunes of Patty. Seeing a dandelion spreading its golden disc by the clear purling water in the roadside runnel, he broke into a joyous whistle. A blackbird and a blue-jay chased each other over and under the rails on the fence, and watching the flash of green neck and vivid blue wings, Achilles felt as if scales had fallen from his eyes, and for the first time in his life he saw that he was living in a beautiful world. How had he been robbed of his childhood's heritage of joy!

When he reached the little home, his mother, Letitia, and Samuel were busy with a vigorous house-cleaning. Mercy at first had felt too out of heart, too wearied and broken down to undertake anything, but Letitia had seen a good possibility of decency and home-life for the first time, and had entreated her: "Don't give up, mother. You will feel better if you get your mind on something new. Don't discourage us, now we've got a chance for the first time in our lives. If you don't help us on, I'm afraid

Achilles will run away in despair. He was talking of it yesterday."

"Achilles run away! Achilles leave me!" cried Mercy.

"He won't if you'll give him anything to live for," said Letitia.

"But where is he now?" cried the poor mother.

"Looking for work, maybe," said her daughter. "He'll come back; let us show him we are trying to make something of this place."

Mercy, spurred by thoughts of her children, stung by fears for Achilles, began to gather together the wreck of her household goods, to see what could be done with it; casting anxious glances toward the road, her heart heavy for her son. At this moment the husband was forgotten. She was a glad woman when Achilles, with his implements, came in.

"I've been to the train to see father start," he said. "Mr. Lowell made me. He gave me this hoe and rake for doing it, and breakfast. I saw Patty. She looked so pretty in a pink frock and white apron, just like other folks; and Mr. Lowell gave her a doll, a cart, a woolly dog, and some candy. You ought to see her!" The little sister was of much more importance than the father.

"O Achilles, you saw your father! How did he look? What did he say?" cried Mercy.

"He looked a heap better than I ever saw him look before. Being a prisoner does him good, seems to me. He said he was sorry, and he was never coming back to trouble us, and for me to take care of you, and he cried and kissed me."

Mercy sat down and burst into violent weeping.

"Wish't I hadn't told you," said Achilles, "making you cry so. Don't, mother. I thought you'd not be crying any more."

Mercy tried to control herself. Evidently her son was not fond of crying people. He had had overmuch of crying and sighing in his short existence. Letitia whispered to her: "Don't discourage Achilles so, mother. I think it was a good sign if father felt bad." Achilles caught the words.

"'Tain't no use. Mother's bound to cry; she's got 'customed to it. I did think maybe we'd have good times now, but we won't. I think father ought to feel bad. I told him so. I told him I'd see myself further if I couldn't be better to all of you than ever he was. But there! 'tain't no use to try."

And again in Mercy's heart the wife gave way before the claims of the mother. She wiped her eyes. "There, Achilles, you will not see me cry any more. I'm going to keep up heart for you children, and you'll all help me. We'll try to do all those things we planned yesterday, Achilles. You shall lay out the work and we'll help you. You are the man of the house now."

"There!" cried Achilles, who liked to be at the head of affairs, "that's something like. Whatever you want, mother, you just sing out, and it's going to be done. It's a little after seven now by the sun. Some day we'll own a clock. As soon as I get off these nice clothes I'm going to work. I say, Tish, I've been to town and back. Won't you go over to Lyman's and get a spade for me to dig with, and ask for some seeds, and plants, and seed potatoes? Things had ought to be in right off. You tell 'em I'll help 'em hay-ing or harvesting, to pay for what I get. We ain't going to beg—we're folks now."

Letitia at once set off across the pasture lot for Mr. Lyman's. Samuel pulled his mother's arm.

"Say, mother, can't I put on the new clothes and go to school now? I had to stop 'cause of my trousers and no shoes. Can't I go?"

"Maybe Achilles wants you to help him in the garden."

"O Kill!" pleaded Samuel, "you let me go. I'm forgetting all I learned about reading, and I want to read, and if I can read I can have that beautiful story-book mother got down last night. And I like the teacher, Kill, she's so nice to me. I will work like sack, Kill, fore an' after school, an' Sat'days an' Sundays, if you'll let me go to school, Kill."

Highly flattered at being thus created into the family autocrat, Achilles paused with his foot on the attic stair and contemplated his little brother.

"I say, mother, he ain't much size for his age, and ain't much good to work—s'pose we send him to school, and make a scholar of him, like some of the big-bugs down in the town?"

"Well, Achilles, just as you say; he has always had to be kept home on account of his clothes. But since Mr. Lowell brought him some—you must help brother out of school though, Samuel. Brother can't do all the work."

"I'll work just as tight as I can lick," responded Samuel.

"Well, then," said Achilles, "it will be an hour

before you need get ready. You begin gathering all the rubbish up from the yard. You put all that will burn in the stove, in a nice pile close to the house for mother, and make a heap of the rest. Don't leave any old tin, or rags, or shoes around."

Samuel darted out to obey.

"Achilles," said Mercy entreatingly, "if you only could forgive your father — now he's gone——"

"I forgave him—a little, down at the depot," said the boy. "I said good-by, and we'd be all right now. I can't forgive him the hull of it till I can forget, and I don't know how good I am at forgetting. Maybe when I see you all right, and things looking pretty nice, I may forgive him some more."

With what pride and security did Achilles now look about his poor home, feeling himself free to work for its effectual restoration. In the new manliness aroused by his independent position, he suddenly began to wonder why the house and its twenty surrounding acres had not been sacrificed in the devastations wrought by his father. He asked his mother, after he had returned to old clothes and bare feet, and had

taken time to reprove Samuel for not working thoroughly.

"Your grandfather left it to you children," said his mother, "so your father could neither sell it nor mortgage it."

"But he wrecked it all he could," said the boy. "Ours, is it? Well, I'll make it worth having, and if ever he does try to come back he just won't get in. I'll be a man then. Samuel! don't run about so here and there. Begin at a corner of the house, and work clean as you go."

Here came Letitia flushed and breathless with running.

"Kill! Mr. Lyman's ever so kind. He says he'll come right over now, and plough the garden, cause you can't work it up right with a spade. And he'll bring seed potatoes, and plants and seeds, and he says he believes there's good stuff in you, and you'll make a man if you have half a chance. And, mother, Mrs. Lyman's baby is sick, and Mrs. Lyman says if I can come over and work for her for a month, she'll give me a hen and chicks, and a little pig, and a new calf. Can't I go? Can't you finish up here and get me a dress and some aprons made, so I can be decent while I go and work? Mrs. Lyman said she'd

lend me an apron and a sack 'till you fixed some."

"A pig!" shouted Achilles "a calf! a hen and chicks! What are you stopping for, Tish? Why don't you go back as fast as ever you can? I'll take hold and help mother till Mr. Lyman gets here. I guess now we can have things that won't be carried off for whiskey. I'll make coops and I'll build a little pig-pen, and mend the barn-yard fence, for our pig and calf and chickens, Tish!"

Letitia was soon speeding back across the pasture, and Achilles put his brawny strength at his mother's service. He swept down the walls, straightened the stove-pipe and fastened it up, and rubbed it clean with some paper.

"He didn't leave us much, only what things were too strong to break, and too heavy to take to town," he said, as he looked at the stove, table, bed, two or three chairs, a tub, pail, and washing bench, which formed the major part of their household gear. "I'll mend some of those things, mother. I will make you a stool or so if I can get hammer and nails. Couldn't you cover them, the way Mrs. Lyman does? And can't you take the old clothes and rags, and braid us some mats the way she does?"

"Put all the rags you find here in this tub, Samuel," said Mercy, stepping to the door. "I did use to make mats, but your poor father sold them and I gave it up."

"Poor father," said Achilles, between his teeth, going out to help Mr. Lyman unload the plough from the wagon and begin work on the garden. "I'll show poor father a thing or two, if he ever sets foot in this house again."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRISONER AND THE PRISON.

IRON doors, pitiless as those which Dante beheld shutting in the regions of the Lost, closed upon Thomas Stanhope—prisoner. The sheriff delivered him to the guard and he was placed in a room to wait for the warden. Stone walls, stone floors; iron doors, iron bars over the windows, all spoke to Stanhope of punishment. The warden came. Stanhope's name, age, parentage, occupation, all were demanded. How he blushed to think that the clean name of Stanhope, of his honorable father, must now figure on the records of the penitentiary.

To the question "What occupation?" Thomas could only answer, "None." He had been life-long an idler. The warden looked up over his glasses—a man of shrewd face, gray eyes and gray hair.

"None? Nothing to do, and too much to drink, have brought here nearly all of the prisoners within these walls."

Then a careful personal description of Thomas was written in the warden's book. Thus he might be identified if he tried to escape, and at departure.

Next Thomas was sent into a bath-room where, having stripped and bathed, he was given the prison clothes—those wide stripes, the hideous livery of sin, shame, and sorrow. After this the prisoner's hair was cut close to his head, and a number was given him instead of a name, and that number was marked upon his clothing.

"Would you rather be in a cell with one man or three?" asked the deputy.

"If I have any liberty of choice, I would ask for one man, as quiet as possible," said Thomas.

He was then led into the lower corridor of a vast stone building of four stories devoted to cells, and placed in a cell where there were two cot beds. The floor of this cell was remarkably white, and the walls were painted in all manner of arabesques and quaint designs. There were two or three mats on the stone floor; a looking-glass and some pictures graced the wall; a table with a lamp and some books—all these things surprised Stanhope, being very different from his idea of a prison cell. True, the place was all

of stone, and the window, high and narrow, was strongly barred with iron; but cleanliness, even temperature, and these little comforts, softened the prison-look of the place.

"No. 763, who went out yesterday," said the guard, "was a master-hand at keeping his cell nice, and so is No. 837, the man who is in with you. 763 left all his traps for the man who should come after him. Did you bring anything with you?"

"Nothing," said Thomas.

The rules of the prison were then handed him to read. His name and number were painted on a little piece of board and slipped into the iron bars of his cell door. The next question was as to work for the new prisoner.

"What trade do you know?"

"None."

Ah, blessed was the Jewish rule, "Teach thy son a trade and the law." A Jew in a penitentiary is the rare exception.

"What trade do you prefer?"

"I don't know. I'd rather learn something that I could use when I am out."

The contractors were, it seemed, fully supplied with men. Thomas must then work for the state.

"Put him," said the deputy warden, "in the shoe-mending room."

So Thomas was taken through the wide sunny court-yard of the prison, where gay flowers grew in long, well-kept beds, and squares of grass were green, into a long stone building, where hundreds of men in the odious stripes were at work, and into a room of benches, where sat over twenty silent cobblers, all mending prison shoes. A foreman sat on a platform, slightly elevated, and watched the workers. They must continue their tasks diligently and not speak except to a prison official. No conversation was allowed between prisoners at any time, except in their cells or when, on a holiday, recreation was proclaimed.

By degrees, by observation or conversing with his cell-mate at night, Thomas learned something of the routine of the prison. In the shops of the contractors, where whips, harness, shoes, clothing, and saddles were made, each man was kept at some especial kind of work. The object of the contractors was to make as much money as possible, not to benefit the men or give them a means of livelihood when they left the prison. Much of the work was done by machinery. A man on entering the prison might be sent to the

shop for making whips; there he might be assigned to the duty of cutting the slim strips of leather, for braiding into lashes; at this work, to which he was assigned, he was kept. Day after day, for perhaps a sentence of five or six years, he was endlessly busy, cutting long hides into thin waved strips for braiding; steadily, ceaselessly, and after the trick of the cutting was learned, brainlessly as a machine, he worked in a terrible monotony. Perhaps, instead, his work was to braid the leather strips. Two or three weeks sufficed to make him skilful, and then, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year, intermitting only for Sundays or three general holidays, he braided, machine-like, the long leather thongs.

Thus it was with all the trade pursued; no man followed a piece of work to its completion; one cut out, another stitched, another stained, another polished, and so on. In the shoe room, one man with a machine flattened the hides, another cut out boot legs; a third, shoe tops; a fourth cut morocco facings; another sewed the facings on, another seamed up legs of boots, while his neighbor at another machine flattened the seams and shaped the boot leg. One man made

the heels, another the soles; one ran the pegging machine, another the heeling machine; it was the duty of some one else to blacken the edges of the soles, and still another hand must run the machine that polished these edges.

Thus, forever working at boots, none of the workers ever made a boot, or indeed saw a boot made; for in the other end of the work-room were other mute workers who completed the process which some unseen hand had begun.

All mutiny, impertinence, idleness, or conversation would be reported by the guard to the deputy and punished by him as he saw fit. Practically the prisoners were all helpless in the hands of the deputy warden, to whom the warden committed the entire personal administration of the place. If the deputy said to tie a man up, lock him in a "blind cell," flog him, it was done. If a prisoner came up often before the deputy he was apt to consider him a "hard case," and inquire very little into the right or wrong of the accusation against him. The foreman could be exceedingly unjust, tyrannical, and aggravating.

As for sympathy or desire to amend the convicts, or help them toward what was better,

guards and foremen alike generally scoffed at prison reform, and said that the only way to reform a convict was to knock him in the head.

Morally there was, in many cases, precious little difference between the foremen and the convicts, but on the one side was power and freedom, on the other felony with its concomitant woes.

Stern self-restraint and a fixed desire to conform to all rules, and behave the best possible, would enable a convict to pass through his term without conflict, but such ability for self-repression is usually wanting in those who have so given rein to evil passions that they are landed in a prison.

Convicts had before them certain incentives to good behavior. After the piece work of the day, which was not exorbitant, was completed, a convict might do extra work and be paid for it, and this pay was placed to his credit with the warden, to be given to him when he left prison. A prisoner who kept all rules, and established a good character with his officers, was called "a trusty," and was put in charge of a corridor, or given some work of the kind about the prison. Good conduct also served to shorten sentence.

When no charges of disorderly conduct were laid against a man, some months were remitted from each year of sentence. These concessions served to keep hope alive, and put a premium on self-control and honorable behavior.

Thomas found, by observations rather than by conversation, that the prisoners counted their time by days, not by months, and each night checked off one day more from their long count. An almanac was the choicest possession in each cell. Some of the men, when their term had passed its half, turned the stick with their name and number in the cell door, upside down, to show that their time was on its "down grade."

One characteristic of all the prisoners was their pallor, even when they were in good health. They were also nervous; there was not a steady hand or eye among them all; a constant quiver of the muscles about the lips and throat was also noticeable.

In each cell was a slate and a library catalogue. The prisoner wrote on the slate the numbers of books they desired, and some of the trustys who attended to the books secured them of the chaplain. A good lamp was in each cell, and the prisoners could read or talk until ten o'clock

"taps." Prisoners who could not read were allowed to pursue some little handicrafts, as carving wood or bone, or making any little trinkets for which they could procure material. If they could paint they were allowed paint and brushes, and decorated their cells as they chose. Writing materials were freely afforded, and they could write and receive letters monthly. These letters were read by the chaplain or wardens.

Meals were good and plentiful, but not a word must be spoken at the table. When the bell sounded for meals, sixteen hundred prisoners in the terrible uniform formed in line and marched in "lock-step," each man's right hand on the shoulder of the man before him, to the dining-room, and when the meal was over, marched out in the same fashion, a lamentable procession.

In writing home Thomas Stanhope could not bring himself to describe this life of the prison; neither did he suggest its ameliorations of cell comforts and decorations or of shortened sentence. What right had he, who had destroyed all the beauty, peace, and comfort of his home, to speak of bringing comfort into a prison cell? Would it be any consolation to his family to think of his return before the completion of his

sentence? Surely not. Those letters, which must be read by stranger's eyes, would be small comfort. The inspection was evidently absolutely needful, but it made the letters less desirable. Thomas formed the habit of writing home once in four months.

For several months he worked in the shoe room, until he became a fairly good cobbler. Restrained from liquor, his natural intelligence, good manners, and general decency returned to him, and he soon became known to all the officials as a "good prisoner." As a boy he had been rather fond of reading, and this taste also revived within him. His cell-mate was a bank clerk, in for forgery, on a five years' sentence; a quiet fellow, given to reading and writing. The chaplain could be seen in the library on Wednesday afternoon, and there was a service each Sabbath morning. These services, and the talks with the chaplain, served to bring back to Thomas some of the religious atmosphere which had surrounded his youth.

After several months in the shoe-mending room, confinement and remorse told upon Thomas Stanhope, and he was taken ill. Removed to the hospital, he lay very sick, but admirably cared

for, for some weeks. When October came he was able to walk about the ward and to take exercise in the pretty garden that belonged to the hospital department. The chaplain visited the hospital twice each week, and held a service for convalescents on Thursday afternoons. The convalescents and invalids were relieved from the law against conversation, and might visit each other in their cells, or converse in the corridors or garden.

As Thomas became stronger, he fell into a habit of aiding the nurses, and waiting upon the sick, and commended himself to the physician in charge, as a good nurse.

When he was about ready to be discharged from the hospital, one of the sick convicts died. That was a doleful funeral. The body, wrapped in a large piece of the hated stripes, was laid in a rough pine coffin, over which a pall of the stripes was thrown. The coffin was put in a prison wagon, and on it sat a guard. The wagon was driven by a convict in stripes, and behind it walked three other convicts in their tell-tale dress to aid in the burial. One of these attendants was Thomas Stanhope. Thus, dishonored alike in life and death, the felon was

carried outside of the town, to the "convicts' burial-ground." Prisoners who had friends were allowed to send for them when they were in mortal illness, and the dead or dying were also allowed to be removed by friends and given ordinary burial.

Searching thoughts filled the heart of Thomas Stanhope, that gray early morning as he followed the rattling cart which carried the dead felon to his burial. The soul of Thomas Stanhope had been brought into a dry and desert land and placed before Sinai, flaming and thundering with the wrath of God. The prayers of his fathers in many godly generations were come up for a memorial before God, and God was answering them in strange ways.

Of his soul exercises Thomas said little. Many prisoners professed loud repentance, in order to arouse sympathy or secure shortening of sentence. Overwhelmed with deep penitence as he was, Stanhope could not feel that his sentence was too long. How many "counts" of wasted time, of abuse, riot, and drunkenness were against him in all his past life!

Able to leave the hospital, but not strong enough to return to work in the shoe-room,

Thomas was sent to the kitchen department. There were men, sitting on rows of low benches, who passed the years of a sentence in peeling potatoes and turnips! By good luck the prison was also in need of brooms, and some of the men detailed to the kitchen department were set to making brooms. Fortunately Thomas was ordered to the broom-making. He took genuine interest in his brooms, and became the most expert broom-maker that had ever been in the prison. He made big brooms and little brooms and brush brooms. He was set to making handsome brooms for presents to the prison officers, and a dozen of notable brooms to send to the Governor's lady. For eighteen months Thomas made brooms, and by that time he doubted if any one in the United States could produce a more admirable broom.

A peculiarity of prisoners is, that they have many curious hallucinations concerning their future in freedom. One and all, they fancy that as soon as they are free the gates of fortune will swing open before them. They plan the most extraordinary methods of making money, and the most dazzling successes. Thomas was not exempt from this dreaming; he, too, planned what

he should do when he was free. He would open a broom factory; he would build up a large business for himself and his sons. It did occur to him sometimes that money was needed, even to set up a broom factory, but he was earning a little, now and then, by extra brooms, and somehow it seemed that in ten years he must make some large amount. He would leave prison with money, set up a broom factory, take Achilles and Samuel in with him, persuade Mercy to return to him, and a prosperous and happy home should bless and shelter his old age.

This was the prisoner's dream.

But the broom-making came to an end. Thomas, being a man of some general ability, did not keep in one routine of work as long as many of the other prisoners; he was noticed as a man to be relied upon, and so received a change. From the kitchen and the brooms he was called to the hospital department to be a nurse. A very good nurse was going out, and the surgeon remembered Thomas, and sent for him to fill the vacant place. For three years Thomas was nurse. The place was comfortable and easy, and in it he was freed from the most onerous restraints of prison life. In the hospital department he be-

came the right hand of the doctor and the chaplain, and here Thomas Stanhope developed and maintained an upright, Christian character.

As he found his ministration acceptable to the sick, he gradually changed his plans for his future. Perhaps his boys would have found out ways through the world for themselves by the time his sentence had expired; then, together, they would try and restore that cottage home on the mountains and make it a happy abode for Mercy and the girls, and Thomas would go out as a nurse in Ladbury; he felt sure that he could make a reputation as a valuable nurse, and so gain a comfortable support. Sometimes he wondered if he might not be tempted back to drink by physicians who would order him to use liquor freely for his patients. Would his thirst awaken and again destroy him? But now that thirst seemed dead.

Four years Thomas maintained his place as nurse in the hospital department, and he had now been six years and a half in the penitentiary when the deputy warden ordered him to take charge of a corridor of cells as a trusty. In addition to this, he was detailed as an evening instructor, for classes of such convicts as desired

to learn to read, write, and cipher. This was another good change for Thomas; it aided him in the recovery of self-respect, and it helped to apparently shorten time by new occupations.

This was the life of Thomas Stanhope during his ten years' sentence; having sketched it briefly, we return to the fortunes of his family.

CHAPTER V.


ACHILLES STILL MOURNS PATROCLUS.

SLOWLY went the days with the prisoner. The seasons changed and he scarcely knew it. Sometimes from the prison-yard he lifted his eyes to a sky of steadfast summer blue, or caught a waft of air from meadows newly mown. The violets of April were forgotten in the splendor of the roses of June, the roses were supplanted by the regal pomp of the dahlias; ripened grain succeeded to ripened grass; the birds, which had sung the pæans of their return, now sung their "wa' gang" lyrics sad and clear, and in the slow monotony of his prison Thomas Stanhope held no communion with nature in these changeeful pageants. His communion was with his own heart, and with the past. Penitence is a salutary, but not a joyful, mood of the soul; in its deeper shadows lies that intense bitter remorse which is the penitence of the world without hope. So, marked only by change of labor, by the recur-

rence of meals, by the hours of going to bed and getting up again, moved the days of Thomas Stanhope. As he worked, what ghosts of past opportunities wasted, of happiness and fortune squandered, rose to mock and rebuke him! A good name, plenty of friends, a modest little competence, a home, a fair kind wife, children of good promise—to thee he had sacrificed all these, O Moloch of alcohol! How he gnashed his teeth, remembering what had been, and what might have been. Love, honor, fortune, home, all ended in—a ten years' sentence. However, there are some of our perverse human race which will have none of a door of hope, except in the valley of Achor, and when youth is passed.

Meanwhile, this being the fortune of the prisoner, what was the fortune of his home?

Mercy in her sorrow and apathy of misery found herself seized and carried along by the strong currents of her children's hopeful energy. These children had the vigorous nature of old Deacon Stanhope, full of indomitable zeal, fond of work, of triumphing by main strength over adverse fate. They were in the rebound of the first freedom, the first possibilities of their lives.



All the want and mortification and loss of their past stung them to acquire something for themselves, to have, and to do what other people did. All their instincts were the hereditary instincts of a line of decent home-builders. Why, now that their father was gone, should they not have a home, and clothing, and comfort, like other people?

Achilles was an unusually sturdy, shrewd lad. He had from early childhood worked for the neighboring farmers, from the time, indeed, when at five years old he could only gather stones in a little home-made cart. From such labors he had secured food for himself, and often for his mother. Thus the habit of labor was formed in him, and better than other boys of his age he knew the methods of labor.

Letitia had never had opportunity to be a child; she had been her mother's friend, nurse, solace. Thanks to a good constitution, and the pure mountain air, her premature cares had not injured her growth or health. She was at an age when native pride and decent instinct begins to stir in favor of respectable clothes and tidy surroundings. She planned as enthusiastically as Achilles, and the two aroused and inspired

their mother. At first Mercy had agreed to whatever was proposed, and had taken hold of the work merely to escape from thoughts and to please Achilles, lest in despair he should desert his unhome-like home. But as day after day drifted by in safety and peace, quiet and kindness and good food began to tell upon Mercy, bringing back health to mind and body. She caught some of the enthusiasm of her children; her house-keeper's instincts, which had been not quite destroyed, revived again. It seemed good to her to sit down in a clean room, with no terror of a rum maniac's return; it was a new experience seeing affairs improve and not degrade, and finding that household belongings increased instead of diminishing.

The house well-cleaned, all the bedding washed and aired, the clothes mended, new clothes made, all the refuse rags and tatters washed, cut, and braided into mats, in which work she was helped by the nimble fingers of Samuel, Mercy began to find a new comfort in living.

Nothing so revives a mother's heart as the thoughtful kindness of a child. How could Mercy but take comfort, when Achilles was so thoughtful for her? He came over the hills one

evening, carrying on his head a comfortable splint-bottomed rocking-chair.

"I bought it for you, mother," he said, "of Mrs. Canfield. I bought it by work. I'm going over to churn for her evenings, all summer, and she gave me this, and she'll give me some other things; she has a lot of things up in her attic. There's a good lounge up there I can have if I work for it; it will look nice in this room, and Patty can sleep on it when she comes back."

Seated in this chair which Achilles had worked for, and Letitia had cushioned with patchwork, how could Mercy, with her feet resting on a mat braided by Samuel, fail to take hope and see more sunshine in life?

The garden had been Achilles' first care, and when the brown, well-worked beds lay in the spring sunlight; when beans, potatoes, and onions, cabbage and tomato plants, began to shine in green rows above the fresh earth, Achilles was busy mending the front fence, tearing down the stile and putting in a gate, repairing the barn-yard fence in readiness for Letitia's famous calf, making a place for the coming fowls. The dollar, hidden under the water trough, and which had been laboriously earned in cents and

nickels, went for lumber, and more lumber was obtained by pledging all his work during the month of November.

What sweat of honest labor poured over little Samuel's angelic countenance, as his indefatigable brother kept him busy picking up stones, cleaning up the old wreck of a barn, raking and sweeping the yard, and then raking in grass-seed and oats.

"The oats," said Achilles, "will spring first, and be something green, and help the grass to set, and the chickens can pick up what ripens; in a year or two we'll have a green yard. Don't grumble at your work, Samuel, it is not half as hard as this tree-planting I'm doing," and Achilles looked with pride at four trees which he had set out.

"But I ain't half so big as you," puffed the tired Samuel.

"Work won't hurt you," said Achilles. "If you sit in school all day you can work hard at home, and you'll sleep the better for it. A boy that gets good bread and bacon and potatoes to eat, needn't growl at work. Did you get reg'lar good meals and quiet nights last year this time?"

To a child of six it is an effort to summon up the circumstances and emotions of a previous year. Samuel, having accomplished the task, admitted that "Las' year he didn't have nothin'."

"You had a drunken dad," said his brother, "and now he has gone you've no call to grumble at nothing.. You pile all those stones into a real pretty border about that round bed I dug up there. Tish is going to bring over some flowers to plant out for mother. Mother's going to have a posy bed now, same as other people. I'm going to have this place worth something, and I've heard Mr. Lyman say that trees and flower-beds made a place worth a hundred or so dollars more any day."

And so Achilles worked and kept Samuel at work, and the stars had twinkled out in the pink west before Samuel was allowed to wash himself and tumble into the bed which he shared with his brother.

The first three Sabbaths of this new life the family worked the same as on other days. The boys hammered at the fence, and cut wood, and sawed and pounded at the barn, trying to straighten up the door, and nail back some loose boards; and Mercy was beguiled out to plant the

asters and pinks and geraniums and seeds, Letitia had collected.

But toward sundown of the third Sabbath Friend Amos Lowell rode up on Bay Betty, and in his arms he had Patty—a very different little Patty from the one he had taken away on the day of the trial.

“It is not my habit, Mercy Stanhope,” said the Quaker, “to make visits on First Day. That is a day the good Lord has reserved for Himself, and has He not said that in it we are not to do our own work or think our own thoughts?”

“Why, what are we to do then?” demanded Samuel, whose mind was ever on the alert.

“Thee must worship God, read His holy book, praise His name, examine thy conduct, think of the good land where the righteous dead live in the light of God’s face.”

“There now, Kill! What did you make me work for?” cried Samuel while Achilles looked perplexed.

“Mercy, thee has wandered far from the teachings of thy youth. Thee has not done as well for the children as thee might have done,” said Friend Amos sadly. “Thee was reared to hallow the holy day, according to the commandment.”

"I know it," said Mercy. "But in these years when we had no clothes and no way of getting to church or to Sabbath school, and when the poor things were safest out of the way and I dared not even get out my Bible, I have fallen into a way of letting them go just as on other days. I know it is wrong."

"Then thee must right the wrong. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy. I feared thee was not keeping the day of rest, and so I came up to testify to thee and to thy house. Does thee read the Scriptures daily?"

"The nice story-book she had hidden?" cried Samuel. "Yes, Mr. Lowell, she reads that always after supper."

"That is well, but thee will remember to call me Friend Amos and to give me no vain appellations, such as are unseemly. Does thee pray, Mercy?"


Mercy flushed and shook her head.

"Thee must pray, Mercy, and teach the children to pray also. After thee reads the holy word, then pray with thy house, and bid the children to pray with thee. This book, Samuel, is not merely a book of pleasing tales, it has in it the law of the Lord, and is able to make us wise unto

salvation. Thy mother knows all that should be told and taught thee of God and thy duty, and she must instruct thee and the other children. I tell thee, Mercy Stanhope, he that builds on any other foundation than Jesus Christ and faith in Him, as set forth in the holy word, builds on sand and shall fall away. If thee desires the good of thy household, and the blessing of God on thy labors, seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

The good man then took the Bible, read the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, and advising the family to learn both by heart knelt down and made a fervent supplication. He then urged them to attend church and Sabbath school regularly; they were able to walk, and the weather and roads were good. He said he was quite ready to have Mercy purchase at his store whatever she needed for a suitable outfit for church-going, and he would wait for the money until she was able to pay it.

When Friend Amos and the smiling Patty had ridden away on Bay Betty, Mercy began to tell Samuel and Achilles how she had been taught to spend Sabbath when she was young, and what she had learned on that day.



"Tish goes to church with Mrs. Lyman," said Achilles, "and Mrs. Canfield told me last night, when I was churning, that we ought to go to church and be good Christians. I told her we had too much to do just now fixing the house, but she 'lowed she didn't know what good houses in this world was going to do us, if we didn't have houses not made with hands eternal in the heavens. I didn't say nothing, for I didn't know what she meant."

"Then I'd asked what she meant," said Samuel.

"I ain't so dead set on findin' out what things mean as you are," said Achilles, "but if going to church and saying prayers is respectable and going to make somebody of us we'll do it; and if you know anything else, mother, that is like folks for us to do, you let us know and we'll do it."

A month sufficed for Achilles and his co-workers to give the surroundings of their home a somewhat orderly and thrifty appearance. During the latter half of May, Achilles went to the village each morning, and working with the carpenter and glazier, who were busy on some new houses, he earned window-panes for the broken windows, a couple of door-sills to replace the worn-out ones, a pair of wooden benches, and

two or three second-hand tools, as a hammer and saw. He took Samuel with him on the Saturdays, and had him pick up several pounds of nails, where a dwelling had been burned down.

With June, Achilles began to work for the farmers in his neighborhood. He took his pay in meat, flour, vegetables, or pieces of furniture. The school closed for the summer about the first of July, and Samuel's life became a burden, what with weeding, and hunting for potato bugs—but he received some consolation from writing on a slate and reading in some small books with which his teacher had presented him. Mercy began to have ambition once more, as Samuel at her side continually asked, "What does this spell?" "What does that mean?"

Achilles regarded Samuel with pride. "Some day he'll be a judge, maybe, or a doctor," he said. "He'll let folks see that father couldn't keep us all down. We shall do well enough, now he's gone for good."

Achilles never dreamed that this speech hurt his mother, and Letitia was not there to hint the fact to him. Letitia was still working for Mrs. Lyman, intent on learning how to keep house,

and earning clothes so that she could begin school with the Fall term.

Mercy was beginning to have dreams of future respectability. Letitia, perhaps, could fit herself for a school teacher. She recalled her own girlhood, its neat dress, pleasant home—why could not Letitia have something of this kind also?

Mercy herself was not idle. Not only was she busy at the house, but she went out to help her neighbors for a day at a time, or even as nurse for a week or two. The boys could get on fairly well in her absence, as it was summer, and it was a matter of the first importance now to procure dishes, cooking utensils, and some warm bedding.

Friend Amos, wisely alert for the family he had received as his especial charge from Providence, on the day when Thomas Stanhope's earnest speech went to his heart, advised Mercy to look for sewing or knitting which she could do at home, so that the home could always be pleasant and homelike, and cheered by a mother's presence.

"Thee knows, Mercy, if thee is not there, the lads may begin to wander off for a bit, and as they stray around they may fall into ill company

and temptations, as their father did before them. It is thy home, Mercy, that is to moor thy boys to virtue, and all good and prudent habits."

"That is true," said Mercy, "and I only intend to try and earn a little money to fix up the house with, and then I shall try to get work from the ladies in town, or from the shops. I am a good hand with my needle, and some people like hand-work best. Achilles is so fond of gay and nice things at the home. Friend Amos, I hope you will not think I am wrong if I buy some window shades, and a red table cover, and a good lamp, and also some chintz to cover the lounge the boy earned from Mrs. Canfield?"

"Thee is quite right to buy these things, Mercy. Come to the store and thee shall have them at cost price."

And how glad a boy was Achilles, when in October, returning from an absence of four days, spent in corn-husking for a farmer, he found his home bright with his mother's earnings. The stove was blackened, a row of blue dishes ornamented the shelves he had put up, bright tins hung in the little closet, the lounge had a gayly flowered cover; on the table was a red cloth, and a lamp with a shade, and the two windows had

Holland shades with fringe, and beautiful little gilt crescents to pull them down by. Little Patty had come home. Friend Amos had reluctantly resigned her. Letitia's fowls were going to roost in the barn. Letitia was feeding her calf, and also another calf which had a history. That second calf Achilles had found in Mr. Canfield's pasture, such a feeble creature that the good farmer said that to knock it in the head would be the best solution of its life-problem.

Then Achilles boldly begged to keep the creature. He worked to earn milk for it, fed it from a bottle, kept it warm in an old quilt behind the stove, and at last, by his indefatigable care, it became a thrifty, frisky creature.

On Thanksgiving Day after church, Mercy prepared for her household a dinner of roast fowl and apple-sauce, and there was great rejoicing.

Then some one, passing by, handed in that letter written to them by the prisoner. Mercy read it with tears, Samuel sighed in sympathy, Letitia said it "sounded like a nice new father." Achilles was silent.

Then he and Letitia went out to look after the calves. Achilles caressed the head of his *protégé*,

which had a white spot, reminding him of the beloved steer which had been as his Patroclus.

"I don't care what he writes about being sorry," he said to Letitia. "Let him be sorry, he ought to be. But he shall never come back here to raise old Nick, and sell steers. I won't let him! He's out, and he'll stay out!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PIPING DAYS OF PEACE.

WHEN the second summer of Thomas Stanhope's imprisonment brought the first day of July, great changes had been wrought in the Stanhope home.

The first day of July was an important date on the mountain, as it marked the close of the school term, and the teacher always made it a festivity, with music, speeches, and decorations. Achilles, in his rôle of father of the family, attended the examination with his mother. With pride veiled under an appearance of stern criticism, he listened to Samuel "speaking a piece," and Letitia reading her crude composition. No parent present took a more sedate and intense interest than this burly boy in his sixteenth year, on whom the cares of the household rested. He observed to his mother as they walked home that "the children did as well as anybody." He gave his mother his arm, and held up his head, and

was proud of being by an inch the tallest person in the family.

Achilles himself had no intellectual or scholastic longings. During the winter he had gone to school for three months, and put all his energy into arithmetic and writing. As for reading, he read the newspapers, all that he could borrow. He read solely with an eye to the main chance, his one object being to learn how to make the most and best of his little house and plot of ground.

When his newspaper advocated the growing of cucumbers in barrels, he promptly prepared barrels for cucumbers; and to force the cucumbers by turning the tops of the barrels into hot-beds, he took out both sashes from the window of his attic room, and used them to glass the barrels. His mother felt sure that he and Samuel would get their death of cold, but it seemed that the more air they had in their sleeping-room the better they thrive.

When the newspaper informed Achilles that lime, glue, and ochre, made into a wash, was nearly as durable and preservative as paint, he went valiantly to work when the spring rains were over, and put a good coat of pale yellow

over the house and fence. The window-frames, eaves, and doors he touched up with Venetian red, and proud indeed he was of the result. The porch and the rebuilt barn were yet affairs for the future; but hop and honeysuckle vines thrived finely, the trees Achilles had planted grew apace, the round flower-bed was gay with bloom, the two long benches placed one on each side the front door gave pleasant suggestions of evening rest. Thomas Stanhope would not have known his old home, so different is the work of the up-builder from that of the destroyer.

Achilles was wont to whistle lustily as he worked, but music he voted a bore; poetry, in which Samuel revelled, being lifted as into Paradise by the sound of a few rhymes, Achilles boldly denominated "fool stuff;" he preferred to get history and geography at second-hand from Letitia, and his Bible from Samuel, except when, as a respectable and exemplary head of a family, he read it on Sundays. On such occasions, also, Achilles preferred to read sitting out of doors, that he might be seen of men. This was not so much a puerile vanity as a desire that all should know by these presents that the Stanhopes had turned over a new leaf, and were on the

up-grade toward the standing of the ancestral deacon.

Achilles made one exception in favor of a kind of knowledge which did not immediately tend toward the betterment of his fortunes. During the winter his teacher had announced that there would be a course of lectures in the town, on the effects of alcohol on the human system; these would be illustrated with diagrams and stereoscopic views. They were to be given under the auspices of the Temperance Society, and all were invited.

Achilles went; he listened with intentness to the description of human anatomy, the human stomach and its lining, the delicate texture of the human brain, the physiology of the human blood. He stared, with eyes extended to their widest, at pictures of a clean and healthy stomach, and a stomach diseased and inflamed by the use of alcohol; he could discourse learnedly about red corpuscles and their abnormal arrangement under the influence of strong drink. Oddly enough, these lectures gave him more toleration and pity for his father. He expressed this privately to Letitia.

“A man that poured in whiskey as father did

must have been in an awful case. His blood must have hurt him all the time, and his stomach must have been all knobs, and knots, and sores, enough to set him crazy. It did set him crazy, so he didn't know what to do, and that made him cut up so. Now for me, if I'm the least little bit sick, I'm as cross as a mad dog, and if father felt that dreadful way the man told about, I don't wonder he cut up rough. Of course it was all his own fault, going into it at first; but once he got into it, there was that awful gnawing and burning, and exciting and craving all the time. Now I know enough not to get into any such fix. You don't catch me using up the inside of me like that. But I fairly don't wonder father threw things round loose, and tore about. Only don't you tell mother I say so."

"Why not?" demanded Letitia.

"Oh, because—because she'll think I'm getting over the way he acted. But I'm not, and I won't. Mother writes to him, she thinks about him, she thinks too much of him; next thing she'll be wanting him back, and he shan't come back. I won't have him!"

"But, now he is shut up, and can't get any drink, you see, he'll get well, as folks do of any

other disease, maybe, and then he'll be all right, and nice and kind."

"No he won't. I wouldn't risk him. No use to trust a man that's been a drunkard. There's nothing left in him to trust. Don't you hanker after him, Tish, and don't you let mother do it. We're well off as we are. I heard two men riding by last night say, 'Beats all how those Stanhopes are picking up, you wouldn't know the place.'"

During some of the time Achilles had been working in the town with the builders, he had overheard them also talking about him and his family. Achilles was a quick boy at any manual labor, and faithful in doing exactly as he was told. A very little practice made him expert in lathing, and he could make a dollar and a quarter a day at it. As he lathed he could hear the carpenters in the next room talking about him; their words came in snatches, as he untied bundles, and fitted lath in little niches and corners.

"The boy's a real old-fashioned Stanhope. He's a regular worker. One of the kind to make and to save, and to spend sensibly. He's done wonders for that place, he runs it like a man. Rents

out the big pasture, boards a couple of colts from town, and gets a dollar a week for each of them. Planning to put on a porch, and have a new barn; heard him asking what a bay-window would cost, so his mother could have winter flowers. Ah Mercy Stanhope had a very bad husband, but she's got a good son."

"She's well rid of Thomas."

"Why doesn't she get rid of him, sure enough! The law will give her a divorce from him, as he's gone to the penitentiary. The law doesn't keep a woman tied to a convict."

"I reckon she thinks there's no need of it. He's gone, and she's safe and prospering. She is one of the kind that are wrapped up in their children. She won't want to marry again."

"I reckon not. She's had enough of marrying."

"But, in eight years and a half, back Thomas will come."

"Eight years is a long time. Like as not he'll die."

"Not much. He's hard to kill, or he'd have drunk himself under the ground long ago. He'll be back."

"Not till they're all grown up. I reckon Thomas won't want to show his face round here,

and if he lives out a ten years' sentence, he will sneak off somewhere else when he gets free. He'd better; no one here wants him, and as long as he is gone his family hold their own respectability."

Over these words, and like words, Achilles brooded. He resolved to sound his mother's views on this subject. He said:

"Mother, did you know that you could get a divorce from father—because he is in the penitentiary?"

"Yes, my son, I know it," said Mercy gravely.

"And did you know if you got it, he could never come meddling round you or our house again?"

"Yes, Achilles, I know that."

"Well then, mother, why don't you do it?"

"Achilles, when I married your father it was for better or for worse."

"It has been all worse, and he made it all worse himself."

"I know it," said Mercy. "I have had much to forgive and I have forgiven it. I shall not take the divorce that the law allows me. I do not think divorce right."

"And do you mean to have him live with us

again, and drag us down, and ruin us?" cried Achilles hotly.

"No, my son. When that long sentence is served out, you will be a man of twenty-three past, and Letitia will be twenty-two. You will be old enough to hold the home that you have made, and to protect Samuel and Patty. But if ever your poor father comes out from that long sentence, he shall find one friend, one to say a word of welcome, one to help him, and that one will be the wife who promised to love him, and be faithful to him until death."

There was something so noble and brave in Mercy as she said this, that all her son could do was to hang his head and mumble, "You're a thousand times too good for him."

"I can see," said Mercy quietly, "that I have been very wrong to sacrifice you children as I have to him. I should have taken the protection that the law allowed you. He was a man, and had made his choice; you were little and helpless, and no choice was allowed you. When I see you all well, happy, and improving, I feel how wrong I have been to allow you to be deprived of doing and being the best that you could. Your father and I were religiously brought up and well

educated at the Academy here; you children should have had an equal chance. It is too late now to do more than repent over that. I wonder you were not all laid in early graves, like the little ones that are gone. You must forgive my stupidity, Achilles. But when your father comes out of prison you will be all young, strong, full of hope, able to care for yourselves. He will be a broken-down, disgraced man, and I shall stand by him."

Achilles made no reply. He looked about the peaceful home which in fifteen months had been reconstituted by hard, united labor and scrupulous care. He registered a secret vow that that home should no more be defiled by the demon of drink; he was prepared to stand by his home against the world.

But the world was not against the home-making of Achilles, rather it seemed a sunshiny, helpful world, ready to lend him a hand in his endeavors. Work was always ready for Achilles among the farmers and in the town.

Spring brought planting and ploughing, and when the little home acres were planted, the hoeing and weeding fell to Samuel, while Achilles went to help the neighbors. During May he

worked in the town for the carpenters, but in June and July he was haying and harvesting. August found him busy in the town, and the early part of September he devoted to his own place. Then came apple-picking, corn-husking, fall ploughing, and after that work in the town again. In the winter evenings, with the aid of Letitia and his mother, Achilles succeeded in doing a little work at arithmetic and writing, and then he had his newspapers. He was busy as boy or man could be, and contented and happy because he was busy.

When his mother spoke of a possible coming time when he and Letitia could protect the younger children in their home, and she might go forth of that comfortable shelter, to share his father's fallen fortunes, Achilles felt as if the glory and beauty faded out of life. Was not his mother more than half of his home? What incentive would he have to labor if she were not to be benefited? He noticed her on that second Thanksgiving Day, when they had kept their little family festa, and again a letter had come from the prisoner. Mercy was leaning back in her rocking-chair, her eyes fixed now on one child, now on the other, with motherly pride.

"Mother," said Achilles, with a little catch in his breath, "could you leave us? You said you might! Oh, could you?"

"You do not understand me, Achilles," said Mercy. "No, I could not leave you. I could not go where for even days at a time I should not see you all. I only meant that it might be that you would have to take care of your sisters and brother here, and I would take care of him—in the town perhaps."

"You speak as if it wasn't possible for him ever to take care of you. How old will he be when he comes out?"

"Forty-nine."

"There ought to be ten or fifteen years good work in him. You may make up your mind, mother, I'll never see you abused any more by him or any one. If he don't do right, I'll make him, if there is law in the land."

He went out to his usual refuge, the barn-yard fence. The sight of twenty-five fowls, and three young turkeys, the two calves now passed calf-hood, and nearly full-grown, the two colts which he boarded, gave him a feeling of comforting importance and independence. What was that strange thralldom of strong drink which could

lure a man away from home, family, friends, fortune, from his own better self? How could any one exchange the pure, free air of the mountain for the smoke, heat, and foul, heavy smells of a reeking bar-room? How could any one leave the amiable, gentle, decent society of pigs, chickens, colts, and calves, for the companionship of quarrelsome, swearing, filthy human creatures? What was there in a saloon to make up for the wide spread of green pasture land, the shining earth turning brown from the furrow as the share sped through it? What was this infinite madness of destroying instead of up-building and creating? He looked up to the clear blue of the late autumn sky, he felt the spicy breath of the juniper and pine woods, he heard the calls of the last departing birds, the high clangor of a flock of wild geese migrating, and suddenly he seemed to realize the earth with all its growth and life and glory, lying in the hand of the All-Father; he realized that God's work is always of life, up-building progress from higher to higher, good out of evil, much from little, something from nothing. He who up-builds works in the line of God's work, he thought. He who fosters and nurtures and pro-

duces, runs nearest to His work who alone creates; he who wastes, neglects, destroys, is a yoke-fellow of Satan, the great destroyer.

Letitia came and stood beside him. She did not say that her mother had sent her, fearing that her boy might be moody and brooding.

Letitia looked about with pride. "Every one says how nicely we are improving this place," she said. "Do you suppose we can have the new porch and the roof made pretty with a dormer window, next summer?"

"I don't know," said Achilles, "I'm a little in debt yet at the store. We had to get so much at first, and Friend Amos said I'd better get the things, and have the good of them. And then, you see, we go on eating and growing, and wearing out clothes. But I'll try for it, Tish. Perhaps I can get the carpenter and the lumber, and work it out. I'm glad you are going to stay home now. You've been at Mrs. Lyman's nineteen months, and you only went to stay one."

"Well, I learned a great many things there. I learned how to make good butter, and to take good care of a cow and fowls. I'll be fifteen the first of April, and you'll be sixteen the tenth of

April. The tenth, that was the day father got his ten years' sentence!"

"A pretty way for a boy to keep his birthday, having his father sent to the penitentiary, and worst of all, to be glad he was sent! That's what whiskey does for families!"

"Let us try and forget it," said Letitia. "Let us plan. I plan to keep as many as forty fowls, and to sell eggs, and to have some butter to sell, and so to do almost all our store trading with eggs and butter. I plan to get through all they teach in our school here, next July; and Friend Sara Lowell says in the fall I am to come and stay with them, and go to the High School in the town. I plan to get through the High School when I am eighteen, and be a teacher. What do you plan?"

"I plan," said Achilles, "to send Samuel through this school, and perhaps through the High School, and even to college, if he shows good sense, and is not likely to play the fool as some of the men say the Jenks boys did at college. I plan to make this place the nicest place of its size in the county, and buy a few acres more. I plan to set out grape-vines and peach-trees next spring. I plan and plan—and then a

great black shadow falls over all, that father may come home and put us to shame and drag mother off with him; what is the use of planning if mother isn't in it?"

"No use," said Letitia, "but let us plan, and let us pray to God not to let such trouble come. He may even make father good. I read a text Sunday, 'Rejoice not over me, oh mine enemy; when I fall then shall I rise!'"

CHAPTER VII.

FORGIVING IS NOT FORGETTING.

THAT Sabbath-keeping which had been inculcated by Friend Lowell as a duty had become one of the chief pleasures of the Stanhope family. Busy people as they all were, this time of rest gave them opportunity to get acquainted, and to come near to each other in social converse. This is one of the family blessings of the Sabbath which households are likely to overlook.

The needful work of the house and farm-yard finished, Mercy and her family went to the Sabbath-school and church service held at the school-house. When they came back to the cottage, dinner was made ready, and then, either in the house, or on the chairs and benches outside of door, the Bible, the Sabbath books and papers were brought forth, the family read each apart, or one read aloud, and from reading they fell into discussion, and the past and the future, as well as the present, yielded them subjects,

With the grass growing green in the well-fenced yard, the young trees casting their little "balm of shadow," the bees humming among Mercy's flowers, the vines creeping over the cottage, the birds singing and swinging here and there, the pleasant sounds of life coming from the well-kept barn-yard, this once desolate and forlorn place had become a pleasant home indeed.

"Mother," said Samuel, as they all sat before the house, one Sabbath evening in July, "what do you s'pose father does all day long at the 'tentiary?"

"He makes shoes," said Mercy.

"Don't make shoes Sunday, does he?"

"No, he says that then he reads his Bible, and some books which he gets from the chaplain."

"Don't you s'pose he gets very tired making shoes all the time?" continued Samuel, with the pertinacity which seems to be natural to children when pursuing a painful theme.

"Be sure he does," said Letitia, "father never liked to work; he never would work. I never saw him do anything, and yet he always said he was tired all the time."

"That was because he was doing the very hardest kind of work all the time," spoke up

Achilles, who was lying on his back on the grass. "Just you let me explain that to you. The lecturer at the Temperance Rooms last winter made it as plain as day. You put your finger on my wrist, Tish, feel my pulse beating? It gives one move every beat of my heart. Every stroke of my heart throws six ounces of blood through my body. Three strokes move over a pound of blood, you see. Now when I stand up, or move about, my heart beats about seventy-four times a minute; when I work, it goes faster; when I lie down quiet, it only goes sixty-four times a minute, or so. That's the way I get rest, you see, by lying down and letting my heart not work so hard. Every night I am in bed eight hours, and my heart rests by moving thirty thousand ounces, or one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds less of blood than during the day. But when a person uses alcohol, the alcohol makes the heart beat faster, and when a man lies down to rest, and has a lot of alcohol in him, his heart can't get down to sixty-four, it stays way up to seventy-five beats a minute or so, and so you see, is kept working hard for nothing, when it ought to be resting. Of course, then, anybody who keeps the heart stirred up by alcohol is working hard

all the time for all he is not doing anything, and he is just as tired as if he was doing something worth while, and that paid."

"I never saw any one who could remember and explain things the way you can, Kill, if it is something you like," said the admiring Letitia.

Achilles cast down his eyelids, but a broad grin of gratification illuminated his countenance. Letitia's encomiums spurred him to farther exhibition of what he knew.

"Mother," he said, "do you reckon father spent reg'larly sixpence a day in drink?"

"Why he spent very much more than that," said Mercy.

"And he had been spending as much as that every day for twelve years before he went off?"

"For fifteen years at the least," said Mercy.

"Let's call it sixpence a day for twelve years, because my sum is done that way," said Achilles. "If he hadn't saved up one thing but just that, and put it at interest, it would have come to one hundred and sixty a year income by the time he went, or three dollars a week. That's as much as you can make by hard work sometimes, just thrown away spoiling himself and everything else. That's drinking men's economy, that is!"

Mercy sighed. She felt it was safe for her children to be warned by their father's fall, since he had made it impossible for them to be improved by his example; but the subject was very distressing. Samuel, the most active mind in the little group, started a fresh issue.

"Mother, here on the white leaf of your Bible, it says 'Mercy Titus, from Barum Titus.' Wasn't Uncle Barum the one you lived with when you were a little girl?"

"Yes, my father and mother died, and I went to live with Uncle Barum when I was five years old," replied Mercy.

"Was he kind to you, and nice?"

"Oh, yes."

"Never hit you or nothing, did he?"

"Oh, no."

"Then you had a pretty good time, didn't you, with him?"

"Well, yes, rather. Uncle Barum was an odd man. He did not like to spend much money, and he was very quiet. He hated noise, and did not like me to have young company around or any music. I used to beg for even an accordion, but he hated sounds, he said. He did not approve of gay colors, or ribbons, or fancy clothes,

and I often used to feel vexed at not having as pretty things as the other girls. But as I look back, I think I had a very good time, and should have been more grateful. I was always warm and well-fed, and safe, and sent to school, and never had any unkindness shown to me. And the little farm-house was so cosy, with such big trees about it; the milk house with a big spring running through it; the garden full of old-fashioned gay flowers, with bee-hives standing among them; the barn roof was always covered with pigeons, cooing and preening in the sun. I had a horse of my own to ride."

"You didn't know when you were well off," said Achilles.

"Why don't Uncle Barum ever come to see us?" asked Samuel.

"He is very angry at me, and does not want to see me," replied his mother.

"Are you angry at him?" urged the young inquisitor.

"Oh, no, I often long to tell him how grateful I am for all he did for me; he was like a father to me."

"Better than some samples of fathers," remarked Achilles tersely.

"He was angry at you for marrying father, wasn't he?" said Letitia. "You ran off with father, didn't you?" Letitia, girl-like, revelled in the least hint of romance.

"Yes, I did," said her mother sadly.

"That's where you missed it," said the brusque Achilles. "I heard Mrs. Canfield say when Jenny Gardiner ran off and married, she'd live to rue it. She said that no good ever came of runaway matches, or of young folks setting up to know more what was good for them than their elders. She said that a girl's friends had no call to give her any but good advice about marrying, and that grown folks that wasn't led off with a lot of flattery and soft talk, knew much better whether a young man was the right kind of fellow for a girl, than the girl was likely to. Just think how much better off you'd have been, if you'd taken Uncle Barum's advice. Reckon he knew how father was coming out."

"I certainly should have waited, and tried to get my uncle's consent, for he had been a good father and friend to me. But he did not object to your father more than to any other young man. He was fond of me, himself, and said he had brought me up, and I ought to stay with

him as long as he lived, and he would leave me enough to take care of me. It was marriage, not your father, that Uncle Barum objected to."

"Didn't he know father drank?"

"Your father only drank a very little. Uncle Barum was not a teetotaller. He held that a man could take a little liquor, if he liked it, and did not hurt himself, or go too far."

"There's where he was foolish," said Achilles. "What's the sense of a man using a thing that is sure not to do him any good? And when so many folks do go too far, what's the use of running such a risk? A body don't care for the stuff before he begins to use it, does he? What's the sense in stirring up a liking for it? There's too much risk in such business for me."

"I hope you will all feel that way, always, children!" cried Mercy. "We have had trouble enough from strong drink. I look back and can see how the young men that I knew, who used strong drink, have gone to ruin or made no good progress in honor and usefulness, and those who never touched it have made reputation and fortune."

"We're awful fools in this country," said Achilles. "The man that lectured at the Tem-

perance Rooms told about it. In this country we use more beer than tea, and more whiskey than coffee. We pay out nine hundred millions for beer and alcoholic drink; and for all our drinks together, coffee, tea, beer, whiskey, we spend a thousand million. If we took water instead, look at what we'd save! We use at the rate of eight gallons of beer and one gallon and a half of whiskey a year, for every man, woman, and child in this land! Well, some one else has to drink my share, for I won't touch it."

"And mine too," said Samuel. "Mother, does Uncle Barum live over there on the other side of the mountain, in that pretty farm-house yet?"

"Yes."

"Didn't you ever see him after you ran away from him?"

"Well, for a few years he used to pass this house now and then, but he never stopped to speak or seemed to notice it. Then he stopped coming. I think it hurt him to see how all was going to rack and ruin."

"He'd better come by now, then, and see how it's coming up," said Achilles, with pride.

"Mother," persisted Samuel, "how do you go to Uncle Barum's?"

"O Samuel, what a lot of questions you ask!" cried Achilles. "I can tell you, because I've been by there. When you get to the cross-road where the guide-post is, toward Ladbury, you turn to the left, and go on and on round the mountain till you come to a house with a red-and-blue rooster over the barn, and that's Uncle Barum Titus' house."

"Mother, wouldn't you like to see Uncle Barum and be friends with him?" continued Samuel.

"Samuel, go and feed the chickens," said Letitia, "and then we'll have supper. There's something nice!" She saw the tears in Mercy's eyes.

Achilles happened to look at his mother and saw the tears too, but he was not as skilful as Letitia. He cried out, "And I say, Samuel, if you don't quit asking questions when you come back, I'll thrash you, that's all there is about it."

"No you won't, you never do," said Samuel. "Why can't I ask questions? I want to know about Uncle Barum."

"Get out quicker!" shouted Achilles so fiercely that Samuel never stopped running until he was

behind the barn. Then he sat down and meditated on the great injustice of Achilles in thwarting him of obtaining information.

Letitia, with womanly prescience, understood that nothing so diverts a masculine mind as something good to eat, and so went to prepare the Sabbath supper. This was a cold collation, served wherever the family happened to be. Mercy was reviving some of her cooking abilities; she made pies and little cakes, and "dutch cheeses," and sandwiches for Sabbath evenings, which thus became the festa of the week.

It was now the summer vacation. Thomas Stanhope had been in prison two years and three months. Samuel was past eight years old, and Letitia had finished the classes at the school on the mountain, and was to go to school in Ladbury the next autumn and live with Friend Sara Lowell.

Friend Amos had invited Samuel to come to him for a week, for a holiday, and had promised him a new suit, as a reward for being at the head of all his classes. On Monday morning after Achilles had cut him so short in his questioning, Samuel dressed himself in his best, and kissing all the family good-by, set off down the

mountain toward Ladbury. Having gone a mile and a half, he came to the cross-road, and seated himself at the foot of the guide-post to rest. As he sat there, it was not Ladbury, with the big, busy store, Friend Amos, the large jars of stick candy, of which some should be forthcoming for him, not Friend Sara and her lovely molasses turnovers which drew his fancy, but the barn with the red-and-blue rooster, the farm-house where mother had been a little girl, lonely Uncle Barum, who had cherished anger for nearly seventeen long years.

Presently Samuel arose, turned his back on Ladbury, and began to wind around the mountain toward the left. He had very indefinite notions as to eight miles of road; he was not tired, he had recently eaten breakfast, he was strong in a purpose. In his own fashion Samuel was as resolute a little man as his brother Achilles.

It is needless to tell how long, how very long the way grew to those childish feet, how hungry he became, how the wayside spring failed to refresh him, how noon-day came and passed, and the sun was half-way down the sky when finally he saw the barn with the blue-and-red rooster,

the honeysuckle-draped porch with the bench on each side by the lattice.

All was peace and beauty about the place, and all was silence. The curtains were down over the windows and the door was shut. Samuel was too tired to take the silence and loneliness of the house into consideration; Uncle Barum would come, of course. He perched himself on a bench, and leaned back against the lattice. He had stopped to inquire his way at the farm-house just above Uncle Barum's, and the housewife, who was frying doughnuts, had given him two goodly doughnuts, brown and rotund, well-spiced with cinnamon. What a godsend they were to him! He ate them as he leaned back, and then fell asleep and slept for an hour. It was a bird that wakened him, she flew chirping almost across his face. A blue-bird; she was rearing her second brood in a nest among the honeysuckles, close by Samuel's head. He scrambled to his knees and with clasped hands contemplated the squeaking, callow brood.

"Hello there! who are you?" cried an old man, dismounting from a big gray horse at the gate.

"I'm Samuel."

"You look it—jist the nat'ral moral of picters I've seen of prayin' Samuel on's knees with his two hands up, and eyes as big as moons, and curls, look as if they might 'a' bin wet. Samuel are you?"

"Yes sir, only not that Samuel. I'm Samuel Stanhope. Are you Uncle Barum?"

The old man froze at once. He did not touch the child, but seated himself on the opposite bench and contemplated him. Samuel arranged himself for inspection, very erect, very eager, his hands on the bare knees that protruded from his nearly outgrown short breeches.

"Who sent you here?" asked the old man.

"Nobody, I just come. I hope it wasn't running away? But I wanted to see you, and I know mother wanted to hear about you. Kill said I hurt her feelin's las' night talking questions about you. And I was going to Friend Amos Lowell's, and at the guide-board I just turned and came here—like Kill told me how, you see."

"I see, came begging, did you?"

Samuel's face crimsoned. "Why, no! what should I beg for? It's asking for things you haven't got, isn't it? But I've got all I want,

you see, and if I didn't have I could ask Kill and he'd get 'em, of course."

"Got all you want!" cried the old man. "You must be easy satisfied. Don't you live in the old Stanhope place still?"

"Yes, sir, that's ours, us children's, you know," with pride.

"Miserable tumble-down, dirty, broken-windowed, unfenced rack of a place! Just as Scripser has it, the glutton and the drunkard shall come to poverty."

"But you haven't been there lately, have you, Uncle Barum? Why, it is all fixed up! New fence, grass, trees, vines, flowers, paint, benches, nice things inside, pie and cookies for Sundays, chickens and a cow and two pigs at the barn, colts to board, two pictures and nine books of our own. Oh, we've got nice things now! We all work hard, Kill and mother the hardest, and me and Tish next hard, and Baby Patty picks potato bugs, and pulls weeds, and gets chips. You don't know how nice we get on now our father has gone to the 'tentiary. A ten years' sentence, you know. I think perhaps it is doing him good. He writes us nice letters. Sorry letters that make Tish and mother cry, but good, you know,

and he's learned to make shoes, and he reads his Bible, and can't get any whiskey."

"Well, did you come here to tell me that?"

"Why, no; I only told you because I thought you'd like to hear, and you seemed to think I came to get something, and I did not, for I don't want anything."

"What did you come for then?"

"Only to see you, and tell you mother felt so sorry; and mother said you were kind and good to her when she was little, and I felt sure I'd like you, and maybe you'd send your love to mother by me, Uncle Barum."

CHAPTER VIII.

MERCY STANHOPE'S DREAMING.

UNCLE BARUM TITUS was undoubtedly a crusty old man. He had always been parsimonious and selfish, and these qualities had increased and hardened with his advancing years. But the hardest of us humans has usually some tender spot, some germ of softer sentiment, some joint such as in the armor of Uncle Barum's nature his little grand-nephew was rapidly finding. The old man steadfastly observed the child with the damp brown curls, the red, tired face, the bare brown knees, and the feet swinging in dusty shoes. How like he was to what his mother had been! And Mercy had been the one warm affection of Uncle Barum's life.

"Did you walk?" he asked.

"What other way could I come?" asked the incisive Samuel.

"It was a long way for a young one."

"You better believe it was. I just thought

that red-and-blue chicken Kill told me 'bout had flew away. 'Last I got so scared I stopped in the house up yonder to ask, and the lady told me to come on here. She gave me two doughnuts—fat, big ones." Samuel smacked his lips in memory of the dainty.

"Why, I don't believe you had any dinner!" cried Uncle Barum.

"Where would I get any?"

"I know where you'll get some supper as soon as I put my horse up; you sit still there."

Sit still! Samuel felt as if he could sit still forever. The longer he sat the stiffer his legs became, and he seemed to have grown to the porch bench. When Uncle Barum returned and unlocked the door, Samuel thought the room was particularly nice, it was so clean, the western sun shining in at one window, and a spicy smell of ginger-cake in the air. The carpet was of rags, in a pattern of gay stripes, the curtains were blue paper; along the wall were ranged eight yellow wooden chairs, and Uncle Barum's big rocking-chair, with a patchwork cushion, stood by the window; there was a side table under a little cherry-framed looking-glass; on the side table lay a Bible, an almanac, the county

paper, and "Pilgrim's Progress." A table spread for supper stood in the middle of the room. Over the dishes and viands upon it was spread a large square of dark-blue mosquito netting.

"As soon as I make the tea, we will be all ready," said Uncle Barum. "Mis' Williams, she comes in the morning and clears all up and gets dinner, and then fixes out for supper, all but the tea and cutting the bread." As he spoke, he lit an oil-stove and set on the kettle to boil.

"Please, may I have a pail of water to wash me, I feel so dusty," said Samuel.

His uncle handed him a pail partly filled with water, and gave him a towel and a piece of soap.

Samuel rolled up the sleeves of his shirt waist, pulled open his collar, and took a good wash; then he took off his shoes and stockings, rolled up his little breeches to their highest, stepped into the pail and began to scour his feet and legs. Uncle Barum, waiting for the kettle to boil, admired these proceedings from under his bushy white eyebrows. Samuel looked up.

"Kill says, if you've been workin' or walkin' so's you're awful leg-achy, a good wash makes you all right. Kill says it's just as good for horses. Kill says, when he owns horses, he's

goin' to have their legs washed down good every night. There, how nice I feel! Please may I come to the table barefooted? My feet do feel so nice that way."

"Come just as you like," said Uncle Barum, putting the tea to steep, and opening the closet he cut some slices of cheese, several rounds of Bologna sausage, and a plate of brown bread.

"There now, youngster, come to the table."

Samuel thought the supper looked delightful. There was a glass of jam on the table, a saucer of pickles, and a plate of ginger cookies, besides all that Uncle Barum had provided.

"Take your time," said Uncle Barum, filling his guest's plate. "Who is this Kill you quote so freely?"

"Why, don't you know Kill? He's my big brother. He is as big as you are, and just as strong! He can hi'st me right up by gripping my waist-band! He's the man of our house now, and he is a good one, too. Folks say Kill is the smartest boy in our county. Mr. Canfield says mother has got an awful good son in Kill. Kill has about made our house and farm over, and he's going to do thore. We've got it fixed up pretty well outside, and Kill says we must

tackle the inside next. You see, there's three rooms downstairs—the big room, and the bed-room, and a room we don't do anything with, only Kill wants it for the kitchen. Just as soon as we can buy a carpet, and another stove, and paper the wall of the big room, Kill is going to make a kitchen of the other room."

"How's he going to do it?" asked Uncle Barum gruffly, foreseeing a demand for aid.

"Ho! just as easy. Kill knows how. When he was hauling for Mr. Canfield's new house, he got some mortar and he has mended all the walls; and he whitewashed the kitchen and bed-room, and got paint, and painted all the wood-work downstairs, and the floor of the kitchen we are going to have. He painted that yellow, with white spatters. Wish't you could see it! If we can get money enough to buy the paper Kill and mother can put it on, and in the fall Mr. Gardiner is going to sell at auction, and if we have money, we can buy a stove, and a table, and three or four chairs and a carpet, and then mother will have a good room and a kitchen. Kill says by and by, some time, he and me will take hold of things up in our room. Just now, only to keep it clean, and have the windows mended, we let it

go. Kill says we ought to fix up for the women folks first—'cause—'cause they like things."

"How many are there of you?"

"There's mother, and there's Kill, and 'Tishia. 'Tishia is very nearly as tall as Kill. Next year she's going to High School, and going to live with Friend Sara Lowell. I heard a school committee man say to our teacher," said Samuel, dropping his voice to a solemn tone, "that 'Tishia was growing up to be a beauty, and was the smartest girl in our school. And here's me, you see me, don't you? And there's Patty, she's pink and white, and cries pretty easy, and gets hurt easy, and she is only five, but she is very good—for a girl."

The sunlight vanished from the western window. Samuel looked alarmed. "I ought to go!" he cried. "I ought to get to Friend Amos Lowell's! Please, is it very far to Ladbury?"

"It's farther than you'll get to-night, my boy. It is now after six o'clock and Ladbury is six miles off. You will stay here to-night and go to Ladbury to-morrow morning. You shall sleep in the room your mother used to have."

"Shall I? You are very nice and kind, Uncle Barum. It does seem as if six miles was an

awfu llong way, but I can do it if I keep on. I did eight miles to-day and to-morrow my legs won't be so tired. Kill says it is just keeping on does it. You don't suppose they'll know I'm not at Friend Amos Lowell's and get scared, do you?"

"I reckon not," said Uncle Barum, putting away the provisions from the table, removing the dishes to a pan in the kitchen sink, and shaking the table-cloth.

Meanwhile Samuel sat still in his chair by the table, following his host's motions with his eyes; but Uncle Barum perceived that the cherubic head swayed every now and then from side to side, and recovered itself with an astonished jerk. He lit a candle. "Come, youngster, you'll be better off in bed," and led the way up the narrow box staircase.

It had been one of Uncle Barum's notions to keep Mercy's room as she had left it. It was regularly cleaned and aired and the bed changed and remade, and here, as it was when the hasty and foolish girl of twenty fled from it, it waited to receive her little son. Here were the tidies, and the pin-cushion, and the footstool, which Mercy, the girl, had made; here were the little

red calico work-basket, the shoe-bag of flowered chintz, the plain pine table with its white cloth and square of crookedly-reflecting glass which had served her for a dressing-table. Uncle Barum sighed. He always sighed in that room. It had been once the heart's-core of his quiet little home.

He held the candle while Samuel undressed.

"Please, are you in a hurry?" said the child.

"'Cause I want to say my prayers."

"Say 'em. I'm in no hurry," replied the old man.

Samuel knelt down, and in low tones said "Our Father" and "Now I lay me." The words carried Uncle Barum back nearly seventy years to his mother's knee; they recalled to him his middle life, and little Mercy, the orphan niece, to whom he had taught them. Then Samuel branched out into petitions of his own.

"Lord, I hope it wasn't wrong to come here without asking. If it was, please excuse me. I thought maybe mother'd like to hear. Please bless mother and Kill and 'Tish and Patty and me. And please don't forget to bless Uncle Barum; he is very kind to me, and bless Friend Amos and Friend Sara, and all the rest. Amen."

Then he tumbled into the narrow, low white bed.

"Good-night, Uncle Barum."

But Uncle Barum yearned to hear a word more about Mercy.

"I reckon," he said, "that your mother's got to be an old woman by this time. Such a man as she married, and such a raft of children! Reckon her hair and teeth are gone and she's all wrinkled and yellow."

"I reckon you just don't know," cried Samuel, rousing into a flame of seraphic wrath, half sitting up in bed, and fixing round, indignant eyes on Uncle Barum. "Mother is just as nice! I think she's prettier than any one. She has gray in her hair, but her hair is thick and all pretty crinkles. And she has nice, pretty teeth, and she's only wrinkled a little. She is getting round cheeks too, Kill says, and some red in 'em since father's gone to the 'tentiary. She used to be all thin and teary-looking 'bout the eyes, but now she just looks quiet like, and smiles a little at her mouth sometimes. Mis' Canfield said mother had lost her youth 'long of father and was 'newing her youth 'long of Kill. I don't quite know what she meant, only Mis' Canfield is a very good woman."

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"All right. Go to sleep with you," said Uncle Barum, who went slowly down the stairs trying to present to his imagination the Mercy that Samuel's words had depicted. There was no time during the seventeen years since her departure when Mercy would not have been welcomed back to her old home. She might even have come bringing her four children, and Uncle Barum would have received her gladly, always on the consideration that Thomas Stanhope should not be seen nor mentioned evermore.

When Uncle Barum had heard of Thomas Stanhope's arrest and subsequent long sentence, he had been a glad man. The enemy of his house had got his deserts at last. He thought that then perhaps Mercy would come penitently to her childhood's home for refuge. There were children, to be sure, Uncle Barum knew that, but they could work, they could be useful at the house or in the neighborhood, and Mercy could be his housekeeper, as she should have been all her life. So he had thought, reading of the trial and sentence.

But Mercy did not come. In fact, after seventeen years of utter silence, when Uncle Barum had always passed Thomas without a word and

sent no word to Mercy, not even when sickness and death had brooded in her home, Mercy had fallen out of the habit of thinking of Uncle Barum as a factor in her life; he had been eliminated from the equation.

And here this child, this pretty lad, with Mercy's hair and eyes, had come to tell Uncle Barum that Mercy and her children were getting on very well without him. Nice child, that boy, but Uncle Barum felt no craving for him in Mercy's abandoned place; he had never cared much for boys—he liked girls greatly better. A girl could keep a house orderly, make bread, and sew on buttons. Still, that was a very taking little boy. Were the other children as nice? Uncle Barum wondered.

In the morning Uncle Barum was getting breakfast when Samuel came down, refreshed and rosy.

"Hullo! Uncle Barum," he cried. "Do you do your own work? Let me help you. I can set a table—I often do it. I didn't know a man like you could do work."

"I make my tea, and cook any little thing I want, an egg or a potato, for breakfast, and then Mis' Williams comes over and does up all the

dishes and work, and cooks dinner, and lays out supper. Don't you think my house is nicely kept?"

"I think you have an elegant house," said Samuel. "Mother told me how nice it was when she was here. Shall I feed the chickens? I feed 'em at home. I like to feed things. What can I do to help?"

"I've got my breakfast cooking, and you have set the table," said Uncle Barum; "you can come to the barn and feed the chickens if you like, while I feed the horse and milk the cow. After breakfast you may get on the horse behind me and I'll take you to Ladbury, or pretty near."

"Well, you are the best!" cried Samuel.

"How do you expect to get that money to fix up your house?" asked Uncle Barum, as he and Samuel ate breakfast.

"Oh, Kill earns money, and 'Tish is going to earn some this vacation, helping Mis' Lyman and Mis' Canfield, and I am going to ask Friend Amos Lowell to get me some express tags to fix. You punch a ring hole in 'em and tie a string in it; they come all cut, and strings cut, and eyes, and you get as much as two dollars if you do a great many of them. You see, it is no sense for

me to try and get a place, no one would think I was worth more than board and clothes, and Kill says I'm worth more than that at home. And then there's mother; she says we're her comforts, you know."

Uncle Barum took Samuel behind him on the gray horse to the edge of Ladbury. Then he shook hands with him, and bade him slide to the ground and run on to see Friend Amos Lowell. "I'm glad you came," he said.

"May I tell mother you sent your love and are not angry at her any more?"

Uncle Barum hesitated, but Samuel pleaded:

"It says 'not let the sun go down on wrath,' Uncle Barum, and it has gone down so many times in seventeen years! You send your love, may I tell her?"

"You may tell her whatever you like," said Uncle Barum, turning his horse around, but afterward he stopped and looked long after the little figure in knee-breeches and an old straw hat trotting toward Friend Amos Lowell's.

How surprised was Mercy when Samuel detailed his visit to Uncle Barum! How many questions she asked about Uncle Barum and the house. After that, for days, she had a secret hope that

Uncle Barum would come and see her and tell her that her ingratitude and desertion were forgiven. But Uncle Barum did not come. Finally Mercy wrote him a letter, thanking him for his kindness to Samuel. The letter was not returned, neither was it answered.

"But he sent you his love, mother," Samuel would reiterate.

Mercy had other dreams than those about Uncle Barum. As letter after letter came, in intervals of months, from her husband, the bitterness of the past began to die out of her heart, and she recalled the love of her youth and the better days of Thomas Stanhope. She pictured him to herself, a thoroughly repentant and reformed man. Sad, but serene, and with steadfast purpose, he might come out of that long imprisonment a new man. Would his old friends and neighbors forgive him, lend him a hand, say a good word to him? Would Achilles forgive him? Would the prodigal father be welcomed to a seat by his old fireside? Might it yet be that he and she would see these two little ones, Samuel and Patience, grow to maturity beside them? Would Letitia and Achilles, the man and woman, forgetful of an evil past, help their

father on in a new life? She dreamed how this might be—the broken household band united once more; age calm, peaceful, honorable, though prime had sowed evil seed and meridian had reaped a bitter harvest.

She dared not utter these thoughts to Achilles; it was better to leave time to deal with him. But Letitia had a milder and more closely sympathetic nature; she spoke to her of these trembling hopes sometimes when they two sat sewing and the others were out of doors at their work.

“I want you some time to know what was good in your father, Letitia,” she would say. “You can only remember him as a broken-down, ruined drunkard; once he was kind, bright, generous, cheerful, friendly to every one. When strong drink destroyed him, it destroyed as fine a fellow as there was in the county. The Stanhopes were all good, creditable people.”

But while Mercy dreamed of these things and Letitia shared her dreaming, she never hinted of that future or that home-coming to the prisoner. She never told him of their improved home and circumstances. She only said “All were well,” “Every one was kind,” “They got on well.”

Just as she felt that she could not go to the

penitentiary and see her husband in a felon's clothes, so she dared not put any premium on a pretence of repentance by hinting at good fortune that might be his when the sentence was served out; and then—there was Achilles.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW MERCY STANHOPE WAS STRONG IN THE LORD.

It is written in the prophet Hosea: "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her unto the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth." This is the history of many a human soul. There are those who in lands of peace that are as the garden of the Lord forget God their Maker, and tread with careless feet the downward slopes of spiritual death. And these same souls, brought for their eternal good into the wilderness and the bitter and stony valley of Achor, find there the Rose of Sharon blooming, Christ the true vine, see wide horizons of immortal hope, and take up the songs of heaven, the songs of peace and love that they sang in early days of unworldliness and innocence.

Such was the heart-history of Mercy Stanhope.

As a young girl, the very restrictions of her life at Uncle Barum's had caused her to set an undue estimate upon the little luxuries and pleasures of existence which her uncle's asceticism denied her. In the rebound from the rigorous quiet and plainness of her early home, she had run away with dashing Thomas Stanhope, who claimed that all that a person wanted it was good for him to have. If Thomas had been a fairly moral and prosperous man, no doubt Mercy would have drifted into the soul-deadness of a very worldly woman, not having God in all her thoughts. During the years of Thomas Stanhope's lowest fall, Mercy dropped into the very apathy of misery, too hopeless to make any effort for herself or for her children. In these days how beautiful seemed the peace, quiet, righteousness of her early home, how hollow and fickle and unsatisfying the mere amusements of earth!

Then the incubus of the drunken husband and father was removed from the home; energy and hope returned in the enthusiasm and helpfulness of her children. Amos Lowell led Mercy back to those walls of peace and strength, prayer and the Word of God. She began to find God an ever-present help in time of trouble; when new cares

pressed her, she felt that it was blessed beyond speech to take them to the feet of Christ the Helper and to leave them there. Thus was Mercy renewing her youth; the wilderness and the solitary place were made glad in the presence of the Consoling One. A new song, even praise unto our God, was put in Mercy's mouth; her vineyards were laden in the very vale of desolation; Achor had golden gates that opened upon the Land of Beulah.

In her years of tribulation Mercy had become a very silent woman; her early training had been toward quietness, and shut away from social life, and burdened with domestic troubles which could not be spoken of; silence had become a fixed habit, only broken in the privacy of her home, with her children. Even to them she was reticent of her fresh hopes and spiritual emotions. Her voice took a new fervor in their family prayers; she would linger over some passage in the Word and explain it as she read; her face had the light of peace as she sat in the sanctuary, and by these signs her children and her fellow-Christians felt that old things had passed away and all had become new.

Step by step, with her mother, in these experi-

ences went Letitia, and when Mercy desired to renew in the house of God her girlhood's vows, Letitia went with her. This to Mercy was not unexpected.

She was surprised when little Samuel insisted on his right to "let every one know he loved God. I do love God," said the child, "and I'm going to be a minister when I get grown up. Why don't you let me begin now?"

"So you shall," said the gray-haired pastor. "God called Samuel the prophet before he was older than you are to minister near the altar and abide in the courts of the Lord's home. 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me.' 'Whoso receiveth one such little child in my name, receiveth me.'"

Then he turned to Achilles. "Achilles, are you not coming to God's altar with the rest? Shall I not receive you all together into the Church of God?" Achilles shook his head.

"Achilles, I am sure you pray and read the Bible, and no one is more particular than you to do what is right," urged Mercy.

"Somebody in this house," said Achilles bluntly, "has to stay out of this thing and show common-sense for the rest."

"Why, Achilles, what do you mean? Is it not common-sense to serve God?" said the minister, astounded.

"Oh, that's all right enough, if it don't go too far," said Achilles, "and I won't let it go too far. But I can't talk before mother."

He went out of the house and sat on the wood-pile. The minister considered this an invitation to him to follow and talk privately; so he also went out and sat on the wood-pile.


"What is in your mind, Achilles? Speak out freely. I have been a boy of your age; perhaps I felt just as you feel now."

"No, you didn't," said Achilles, "because you never were fixed out just as I am. But I don't mind telling you exactly what I think. You see, mother and 'Tish and Samuel, they are a softer-hearted kind than I am, and they are dead sure it is a part of religion to forgive and forget."

"That is certainly a part of religion," said the minister.

"Well, it's a part I can't take up with on their account. I don't mind so much for myself. I'm a boy, and a few kicks and curses more or less didn't signify, and I might even forget about the steer and the rest of the things; but I won't

forgive about mother and 'Tish and the little ones, so I won't! You see how comfortable we are here, and how mother looks well and contented, and 'Tish is like other girls, only prettier, and the little ones are having a chance for themselves. They're going to keep on having their chance, and I'll see to it. The rest of them are that soft-hearted they keep pitying father, and have made up their minds he's sorry and ready to be all right. I have heard before of folks all right in prison and all wrong out of it. They think he'd come back penitent and keep straight. I know he wouldn't. They think it is their religious duty to forgive him and help him, and next thing there'll be a petition up to shorten his sentence and they'll be the first to sign it! Now, if I join the church and say I'm a Christian, first thing will be asked, 'Do I forgive my father?' Yes, I forgive him as long as he's shut up safe. If I am a Christian they'll expect me to be hoping that a part of his sentence will be let off, that the governor will pardon him out, to wish he could come back and share with us. No, I don't, and no, I won't! Would I turn a mad cat, or a bear, or a lion loose here? There's none of that kind of forgiving about me, sure. If he gets par-



doned out, and comes along here, he don't cross that fence line! He shan't cast a shadow over our door-sill! If he tried, these Christian ones would feel it their duty to let him come in, but I'm not going to put myself where I can't say, 'Out you are, and you'll stay out!'"

The good minister contemplated Achilles in silence for a time. This was a different case of conscience from any in his experience. He remembered Naaman the Syrian, and his exception in favor of the house of Rimmon, but he concluded that this nature thus revealed to him on the wood-pile was a deal more iron than clay, and that it was best to leave such a nature to the slow, effectual processes of God's providence.

"Achilles," he said, "did you ever hear the proverb that it is not well to cross a bridge before we come to it?"

"Yes," said Achilles, "but it's a bad business to fix yourself out so you can't cross the bridge when you get to it."

"That is true," said the minister, "and as just now, if you should join the church, you would do so retaining a frame of mind that you feel might be inconsistent with your profession, I think no doubt you had better not join it."

"That's just what I think," said Achilles.

"At the same time you truly desire to please and serve God?"

"Yes, so far as I can without hurting folks," said Achilles.

"The truth is, our duty to God and our duty to our fellows never really conflict," said the minister. "It may seem as if, in a given case, they might, but when the case is put to the point of trial, a way is clear, as when the sea or the Jordan divided. You know sometimes, Achilles, it seems as if a road closed up, or two walls met, so we could not pass on; but when we come to the place, we find the road open still. Now are you willing to ask God to show you what is truly right toward all the members of your family, and help you to feel and do what is good for them all?"

"Well—yes, I am," said Achilles after meditation, during which he mentally reserved the privilege of only seeing it right to keep the serpent out of Eden.

"Let us leave it there, then," said the minister.

Thus when Mercy, Letitia, and Samuel came forward to unite with the church, Achilles re-

mained behind with little Patty—for the good of his home and family, he thought.

When Mercy next wrote to her husband, she told him of this step which she had taken, and unfolded the new life that had entered into her soul. When Thomas replied in the spring, at the end of three years of imprisonment, he told how the grace of God had found him in prison, and how he felt that he had forgiveness of sins and strength for obedience.

This filled Mercy and Letitia with joy. Achilles was silent and a little gloomy. He considered this profession of piety a mere dodge on the part of the prodigal—to tend toward a shortening of his sentence, awakening public sympathy in his behalf.

He privately requested one or two of his friends among the masons and carpenters with whom he worked, to give him news if any petition in his father's behalf was circulated. "I'll fight it," he said. "He is as well off as he deserves to be where he is, and not half as bad off as mother would be if he got loose. I am only sixteen; he must not come out till I am a full-grown man and able to defend the family. I'll go and tell Judge Noble so, and the Governor too, if they

talk of letting him come back to spoil everything I've done."

"Don't you fear," said the boss carpenter, "no one wants him back, he was getting to be a town terror. He is well off where he is. We're all proud how you youngsters are getting on. His case was a bad one; he'll serve out his full time, never fear."

"I hope so," said Achilles. "I wouldn't want mother to know I was acting against him, it would only hurt her feelings."

As for Mercy, it had not entered her mind that any part of the sentence might be remitted. Thomas had constantly said that he deserved all he got, and was far better off where he was than he deserved to be. But three years of the sentence had flown by like the wind, and the other seven years would go by as quickly, and then?

With Thomas a Christian man, anxious to atone for the past, could not he and she have a quiet, humble old age, helping each other on toward heaven? This home belonged to the children, and thanks to the children it was comfortable and pleasant. There the unhappy father had no right to intrude and claim a place. But might not she and he have some other little

place, two or three rooms for themselves, and work for each other, where the children could come and see her every day? And so by degrees, perhaps even Achilles would learn to forgive and forget.

But to set up even such a little home would require money, and how should she put by a little fund for this purpose? In seven years she might, without injustice to the children, lay up perhaps two hundred dollars. Upon one thing Mercy was resolved: she would not go farther from her children than Ladbury.

That goal of ambition which Samuel had explained to Uncle Barum, a separate kitchen, a sitting-room with wall-paper and a carpet, was now attained. The united efforts of the little family had made the lower part of their home very cosy and pleasant, and Letitia and Mercy were planning that the next summer they themselves would paint and paper the boys' upstairs room, braid mats for the floor, buy a flowered muslin curtain for the window, a little bracket lamp, and convert some of Friend Amos Lowell's store-boxes into table, wash-stand, and seats. Already they had pieced two quilts for the boys' bed, and Friend Sara Lowell had invited herself to come out to a quilting, and bring the needed

cotton. How, with all this on hand for her praiseworthy children, could Mercy find a place to begin something for the benefit of her graceless husband?

However, animated by her new hopes, Mercy remembered an old saying of Uncle Barum, that "we can make our money grow while we sleep." She quilted a day for Mrs. Lyman, and took in pay a setting of eggs of a choice new breed of fowl. These fowls she would dedicate strictly to her fund—they could grow while she slept. One or two new kinds of patchwork were then much in vogue among her neighbors, and Mercy obtained the elaborate patterns and engaged to piece three of the spreads. She was methodical; she set apart just one hour a day for this work. She had hitherto gone to bed at nine; she would sit up until ten and do patch work or knitting or button-holeing for her neighbors, and the results of that daily hour, for seven years, should be laid up toward providing the new home she was to furnish for her husband when he came out of prison. Every ten dollars should go to Friend Amos to be invested or put at interest. No one, not even Letitia, was to know of this hoard or its design.

Letitia spent this winter with Friend Sara Lowell, working for her board and going to the High School. Samuel now had Patty for company to the district school, and as they trudged off, taking their dinner with them, Mercy was alone most of the day, for Achilles had usually employment. One while he was cutting or hauling wood, again he was going around with the threshers, or even sent off by some of the families to the city market with a car-load of sheep, turkeys, or hogs. Achilles was a boy to be trusted; he was doing a man's work and taking a man's place among the neighbors.

Thus left alone at her house, Mercy found her satisfaction in adding to her work for the neighbors and the shops, work for the pleasure of her family. Now it was a pretty hood for Letitia, and scarfs and mittens for the boys, to mark a Christmas; now she revived the skill of her girlhood, and worked on muslin an apron, a handkerchief, and some neck ruffles for Letitia, remembering how much happiness such trifles would have afforded herself when she was young. She pieced stool covers, and made a pincushion and a scrap-bag for that famous room, which in the summer she and Letitia were to furnish for "the boys."

And perhaps what did her as much good as anything was a secret to herself, a little hoard kept down in the bottom of an old trunk which Achilles had mended and covered for her. When Thomas returned and they had that little home, it must be pretty and attractive, not like the bare dull prison cell, but more like the tasteful home of his youth. And so, slowly and with careful saving and consideration, Mercy was making a little store of ornaments for that far-off home, her last home on earth, probably. A cushion, a table-cover, a few mats and tidies, little ornaments such as she saw now and then at her neighbors and for which she could pick up material. It was not much—it seemed like robbing the children to divert anything which might tend to beautify the home for which they worked so hard.

The application of her spare time and all her taste in such ways became a passion with Mercy Stanhope. All her life she had coveted these pretty trifles in which most people superabound, and now for the first time she could give a little indulgence to her taste. The neighbors began to find out that Mercy Stanhope was inventive and skillful. "Show her a pattern, and she could

turn out the very thing." She was the one to whom her acquaintances applied thus:

"Mrs. Stanhope, I do want one of those new sofa cushions," or, "I'd give ever so much for one of those table-covers," or, "such a set of doilies!" "If you can squeeze out time to make 'em I'll furnish double quantity, and you can make for yourself."

A new ambition took possession of Mercy: her pretty Letitia was growing up; she would in a few years like to have a room of her own, that other room in the attic; her mother could provide decorations for that, even such gorgeous decorations as pillow-shams and table-scarf. Then, too, Letitia would want to have the home tasteful and attractive when company began to come there to see her. Beyond this the mother looked on toward the day when Letitia should marry. Would it not be nice to have a little store of fringed and initialed towels, of hemstitched or scalloped pillow-cases, of napkins and holders, and bags, for Letitia's future home?

Achilles became her confidant in these plans for Letitia, and the mother and son looked from forty to a hundred times at every new treasure achieved by the skill of the industrious Mercy.

Achilles began to get ready to lath and plaster the unfinished attic room, which Letitia might like to have for herself some day, and as Letitia was preparing comforts for the room of Achilles, the circle of family helpfulness completed itself.

"That Stanhope family is just like a bee-hive," said Mr. Canfield to his wife one Saturday. "There's Achilles out in the road working out his taxes, and Friend Amos says Tish is standing right at the head in school. I went past the house this morning, and Mercy was quilting away for dear life on your new bed-spreads, and little Patty was clearing up the front yard, and down in the road I met Samuel digging blood-root and sassafras to sell to the druggist to get money to buy books with. They are a hive!"

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE LAURELS BLOOMED AGAIN.

It was the fourth May since Thomas Stanhope received his sentence, and the mountain was flushed from foot to crown with the laurel bloom. The small, closely crimped, deep-red young buds, the large rosy jewel-caskets just about to open, the wide, pale-pink saucers of the fully opened flowers, these glowed with the flush of morning along all the mountain-sides, hiding and out-dazzling the green of grass and tree. Everywhere among the laurel the birds darted and sung; cat-bird hidden in flowery bower poured a full, rich lay, sweet as a mocking-bird's; high up in lonely places the hermit thrush gave out its volume of clear, pure song; the golden-crowned wren vied with the long-tailed song-sparrow; the bluebird had brought forth her first brood, and taught them to sing and fly; the field-lark, perched on some topmost bough, uttered those few sweet notes, that are so full of peace and deep joy; the

blackbirds, sadly misnamed, as they have not a black feather on their bodies but are richly dyed in purple, green, bronze, and blue, gave their ecstatic twirr, taunting the robins and the splendid jays.

Oh, what a world of bloom and song was this from which the prisoner had vanished! The wife thought of it as she stood in the garden of her little home, and looked at the banks of laurel rising in vivid pink on every side. She wished that for even one day she could light up that dull cell with laurel boughs.

Letitia had come up on Friday evening to stay at home until Monday. The return of Letitia was always a festivity. She stood now in the garden with her mother, grown as tall as Mercy, and fair as Mercy had been in her girlhood, but with the Stanhope resoluteness in her face. As they stood there the two were planning how the week that school closed the boys' room should be finished. That week Achilles was to be away for three days helping farmer Ladley. Friend Amos would come up some morning bringing to them, in the light cart, the wall-paper, a can of paint, and three or four store-boxes of varied sizes. He would take Samuel back with him to stay for

three days, and when the two boys returned there would be their renovated room as a surprise.

"Samuel will not get a chance to run away to Uncle Barum's this year," said Mercy. "Do you know, Letitia, I more than half thought Uncle Barum might come here after that visit. He was so kind to Samuel. I wish I could be friends with him again, he was very good to me—better than I realized. I repaid him poorly. He is getting to be an old man now. He must be lonely."

"I almost think," said Letitia, "that Uncle Barum has visited our school. There came an old man to visit us one day. He did not say anything, but he sat and listened, and looked about. The next time he came I think the teacher called him Mr. Titus, and then it seemed to me that he looked as Samuel described Uncle Barum: not a very big man, red-faced and wrinkled, with gray hair over his coat-collar, and bushy white eyebrows."

"It must have been Uncle Barum! I wonder what he was there for. He did not speak to you, Letitia?"

"No, nor even look at me. But one of the

girls, Madge Terhune, is a kind of relative of Uncle Barum, I think."


"That must be Sacy Terhune's daughter. Sacy is a cousin of Uncle Barum. Do you know Madge?"

"No, she don't go with me. Some of the girls don't, most of them do, and for the rest it does not make any difference. Some of them don't see me on account of my working for my board at Friend Sara's, and on account of father. But never you mind that, mother, I don't."

The bees hummed to and fro from the three hives that Achilles had established under an arbor covered with hop-vines. Mercy sighed. The father, it seems, must drag down his children in his fall, despite their best efforts. Great is this responsibility of parents, close indeed the solidarity of the family.

"Mother, what is that sound like a voice that I hear now and then?"

"That is Samuel on the knoll back of the barn. The child has been reciting pieces in school this year, and is quite wild about it. He practises his pieces all the time, and Achilles says he also invents speeches—preaching, he calls it. Last week Achilles found him standing on a stone in



the upper pasture preaching to Mr. Canfield's sheep. There were some thirty sheep and lambs, and the sound of the child's voice had brought them all together about him, and they were gazing at him while he preached and gesticulated. Achilles said it was a funny sight. He told Achilles that he was having church and the sheep were his congregation."

Presently Achilles came home from his work at Mr. Gardiner's, and then Samuel, running from behind the barn, spied Letitia and came forward, shouting with joy.

Up the road moved a little blue sun-bonnet—that was Patience. She had been spending an hour or two at Mrs. Gardiner's, playing with the baby. Mrs. Gardiner had promised her a sheep if she would amuse the baby for a while every day all summer. The baby was pretty cross, but Patience had to the full the quality of her name, and she beguiled the infant Gardiner to forget the vexations of teething. Patty began to dance with joy when she saw her sister, but while dancing and skipping she carefully carried a little basket.

"It has a hot loaf of gingerbread in it," she cried, handing it to her mother. "Won't that be nice for supper, now Tish is home?"

"'Tishia," said Achilles, "I thought perhaps I'd have the new porch up before you came home. It is going up next week, sure. Won't the house look nice then? Do you see how large the grape-vines are I set out last year to grow at the porch corners? I shall turn barrels over them, so they will not be hurt while the men are working. Mr. Canfield told me to-day that this place would not have been worth five hundred four years ago, and now he thinks when the porch is up and the barn repaired, it would fetch a good fifteen hundred. But of course selling is not a question. It couldn't be sold before Patty was twenty-one, and we won't want to sell it then. I say, Tish, if we keep on, won't it be a dandy place in fourteen years? I hope before then to buy as much as ten acres more of land. Mother, you'll have as good a home as anybody has to end your days in."

Mercy gave her little, quiet smile, and went into the house to make ready the supper. It was to be a nice supper in honor of Letitia. She saw through the open door of the kitchen her four children looking at the bees, the flower-bed, and the vegetable garden, while she made ready the supper. Tall and broad-shouldered Achilles

looked older than his years; Letitia in her neat print dress and smoothly braided hair, was in the early bloom of girlhood; Patience, swinging her sun-bonnet, was rosy and healthy; and Samuel with his big, brown, far-seeing eyes, and largely developed brow, was a child to attract curiosity and attention; grave, thoughtful, and unchildlike in his moods, thoroughly childish in his simplicity and docility. How good they all were! How beautiful she thought them, her compensation for the many woes that had been hers. Was it true that she should end her days among them, in this little home, or in six years more must she part from them? Certainly it should not be a parting for long or for far. These children were hers, life of her life; in them was her comfort and happiness.

Patience came dancing in to set the table.

"Tish says we are a selfish set to leave you alone to get supper," she cried, "only we all told Tish she must play company, so I came."

Mercy wanted Letitia to be with Achilles every moment that she could. She knew well what a sister's loving influence could be to a boy.

Sometimes, in hours when he had come to him-

self and to penitence, in his evil days, Thomas had said: "Oh, if I had had a sister to make my home pleasant to me, if my mother had not died so early, I think I should not have been led off as I was."

Still, common sense told Mercy that Thomas had not been bound to go astray merely because he had had no mother and no sister. Other boys had been left in the same condition, and had borne themselves nobly. The cords of a mother's or a sister's influence might have been to Thomas as weak as the wife's had proved.

What beaming faces surrounded that suppertable! Letitia's three miles' walk up the mountain after school, and the hard work of the rest of the family, had provided sharp-set appetites to welcome Mercy's ham and eggs, and good brown bread, and Mrs. Gardiner's loaf of fresh ginger-cake. After supper, when the two girls had cleared away the dishes and they all sat by the open door and window chatting, Mercy could not but remember other days when this house was a bare wreck and she and her four children had listened for the steps of the returning husband and father, ready to fly to the barn or the laurel shelter on the mountain, if he came up the road

swearing and quarrelling with the demon that had taken him in possession.

"What a difference whiskey or no whiskey makes in a home!" said Mercy to herself. Just then she caught part of the talk between Achilles and Letitia.

"Jim Ladley is beginning to stay down-town nights, and his folks are worrying over it," said Achilles. "Mrs. Ladley says if Jim falls into bad ways and takes to drink it will break her heart. He has always stayed home nights till this spring. She says she could never go through what mother did. I told her mother's troubles were behind her, she had them out with father. Samuel and I have had our lesson, and we'd as soon eat coals of fire as drink whiskey. We know that the door of the saloon is the door of the penitentiary."

"Why don't Mrs. Ladley talk to Jim instead of talking about him?" said Letitia. "She is his mother, and she has a right. Besides, if she talked it over, she'd find she needn't fret. I have heard that Jim spends every evening with Susan Grant. Susan is as nice a girl as there is in town, but Jim is shy of telling his mother, because he is afraid she won't like it. Susan

works at Mrs. Spence's. I heard Friend Amos tell Jim he had better make an honest confession to his folks that he liked Susan. Friend Amos said they ought to be glad of it."

"There! I'm glad you told me, Tish. I'll tell that to Mrs. Ladley to-morrow, when I go over there to my work. I reckon she has been so scared about the saloon notion, that she'll jump for joy when she finds it is a nice girl like Susan that is taking Jim off."

Mercy listened. How the years flew by, and how her children were growing up! It was the sterner cares of life that occupied them now. Once their chatter had been of wild rabbits in the wood, of acorn cups, of little play-houses, made of stones. Then it had been of the garden and the fowls, the pigs, the calves, and now all weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and truth engrossed their tongues. Love and marriage for others were now their theme. How soon would the whirling years make the subject more personal!

Was she not safer and happier for this maturing thought of her children? She was no longer lonely, she had her friends in her own household, to whom it was no treason to speak her thoughts.

That night, after they had gone to bed, Mercy and Letitia had a long talk about the imprisoned husband and father. Friend Amos had been away on a journey, and had stopped to see Thomas. He had not told Thomas the particulars of the improved fortunes of his family, but he had told him they were well and doing well, working hard, lacking none of the necessities of life, esteemed by all. Thomas had sent ardent messages to them all. The chaplain had told Friend Amos that he believed that Thomas was a truly penitent and converted man; he was doing good in the prison, and his conduct was unexceptionable.

"I have not told Achilles yet," said Letitia, "but I shall to-morrow morning, when he goes out to the barn to do the milking. I want to tell it to him just right, so as to help him around toward feeling better toward father. And I shall tell Samuel too, as we work in the garden. Mother, I believe we shall see some good of father yet."

Then Mercy unfolded to Letitia that plan about having a little separate home for the prisoner and herself when he should be free.

"O mother!" cried Letitia, "we could never

let you go. We could not give you up! That would just destroy our home, and fairly break the boys' hearts. Why, father could come here, there is room enough. I see Achilles has begun finishing up that other room in the attic."

"The trouble would not be with the size of the house," said Mercy, "but with Achilles. Achilles will never forgive his father. I cannot so much blame the boy; he remembers only all that was evil in him. He had nothing good to remember. After Achilles was two years old your poor father did so badly. There was a great election excitement that year, and it seemed as if each party made whiskey run like water, treating all day, crowding the saloons with men, and talking to them, and getting the promise of their votes. Your father was one of the busiest; he was a good, bright talker—Samuel gets his speaking ability from him—always ready to tell a joke or give a quick answer. They kept it up from August till November, and your father was never any good after. Achilles can't remember how fond he was of him, and how proud when he was a little baby. Achilles says his father shall never live under this roof again, and you know how set Achilles is. Our minister talked with him;

he didn't tell me what he said, or what Achilles said, but he told me to leave him to time and to Providence."

"Perhaps," said Letitia, "by the time ten years are over, Achilles will have come round a little." She did not say that Friend Amos, greatly touched by the prisoner's penitence, and by the report of the chaplain, had suggested that perhaps the Governor could be persuaded to remit part of the sentence. If Achilles would not receive his father, would it not be better to have him stay where he was?

Next morning she went out with Achilles when he went to milk the cow. She leaned against Spotty's smooth, clean red flank, and patted her silky back, and talked with Achilles as he milked. She told of Friend Amos Lowell's visit, and of what their father had said:

"I'm glad I was sent here; I deserved it, and it gave the children their only chance. I've been a disgrace to them, but they can be a credit to themselves," and she gave the message to Achilles: "Tell Achilles to be a good son to his mother; and to take warning by me."

"Sounds well for him to tell me to be good to mother," said Achilles, giving Spotty's pink

udder a needlessly hard squeeze so that she stepped sideways. "He'll never hear tell of the day when I chase mother and the kids out into a storm."

"Don't be so hard, Kill," pleaded Letitia, "remember it is forgive, if we would be forgiven."

"I see clearly," said Achilles, "that there is likely to be too much of that forgiving done in this family. Some one has to keep a level head and a stiff upper lip, and set their foot down for the sake of the rest. Never you mind, Tish, I'll forgive him just as long as he's locked up safe."

"And then?" queried Letitia.

"And then—just as long as he minds his p's and q's, and keeps out of sight of this house."

"Well, never mind, Kill," said Letitia soothingly. "Six years will be a long, long time."

"Not so very," said Achilles, "when people are as busy as we are; four years have gone like a day. See that nice lot of milk! I reckon you're going to churn to-day, Tish. I'll be glad when it's vacation, and you are here all the time. I say, Tish, you are sixteen past, six years will make you twenty-two. I want you to get married by then, Tish, to some real, well-to-do, first-

class, good-looking man. A sober, Christian man that will do well by you, Tish."

"Nonsense, Kill!" cried Letitia flushing.

"Yes, I mean it. Then you'll be safe from father, and I'll have one less to worry for, and a brother-in-law to stand by me in looking after mother."

"Such a fellow to plan and look ahead!" cried Letitia.

When Letitia told Samuel about Friend Lowell's visit to the prison, and what the father had said, her words met with a very different reception.

"I knew how it would be!" cried Samuel, stopping his reading. "O Tish, I've prayed God so many times to make father good. God waits a long while, you know the Bible says a thousand years is only a little day to Him, but He does it after a while. I've prayed God to bless him, and let him come home and live here with us, and be a real good man. O Tish! then we'd be just like other folks, wouldn't we? It will be so, don't you think it will, after a while?"

"Not quite that way, Samuel," said Letitia. "I think that father is truly sorry, and may come back and do his best, but he never can be

quite like other people. This will be always remembered and laid up against him."

"Why, 'Tishia, God forgives out and out, don't He? My teacher at Sunday school said so."

"Yes, God forgives fully, and says He remembers our sins and iniquities no more. But people, Samuel, are not that way; they forgive—and remember."

"It's very queer," said Samuel, "that God who always does right can forgive out and out, and folks who often do bad themselves can't forgive all, but must keep laying it up."

CHAPTER XI.

UNCLE BARUM AND LETITIA.

THE summer holidays had begun. Over the sweeps of farm-land about Ladbury the rattle of the reaping and mowing machines was heard, as they laid the harvests low; the noon air quivered with fierce heat, the birds were silent in their mid-day coverts, the blackberries hung large and ripe in the rugged thickets of pasture lands.

That surprise which Mercy and Letitia had arranged for the boys had been a grand success.

How well the little room looked in its drab paint, the cheap brown paper with the bunches of roses on it, the curtains of flowered calico, the bedstead newly painted and covered with the new quilts. There were no bureau, chairs, or wash-stand, but boxes covered with patchwork or flowered calico did duty bravely for all these. Mercy had bought a little looking-glass, and turned a small box into a comb-case; Friend Amos had contributed a blue bowl and pitcher, and Friend Sara had donated a blue wooden pail and three gay lithographs.

In fact, Achilles declared the room complete, and in need of nothing but a rack for his beloved newspapers, and a corner-shelf to hold two or three books—the joint possession of himself and Samuel. Samuel said nothing, but he brought in a little brown jar which he had found broken on the roadside, mended it neatly with putty, painted it red, and set it on the window-sill to hold flowers.

“Samuel,” said Achilles, “is just like a girl, he has to have flowers about.” But in spite of his half-jibing speech he made Samuel a hanging-basket of the first cocoanut shell that he found, and asked Mrs. Ladley for a vine to plant in it. There was one good thing in this Stanhope family, they were very considerate of each others’ particular tastes; that goes far toward making a happy home.

The front porch was also finished, the benches were placed on it, the grape-vines, which Achilles had planted the previous year, were trained upon the corner posts. Achilles spent considerable time sitting on a fence across the road, “getting the effect” of this porch, toward which his desires had for four years been tending.

“When I can get a nice big dormer window

set in the roof of that room Tish is to have some time," he said, "that house will look fine." Then he turned his admiring gaze toward the barn. It had new clapboards, a repaired roof, a new door, and a gay coat of red paint. It was a barn to be proud of. "Some day," said Achilles to Letitia, "I shall have a wagon and pair of horses, and ten acres more of land, and then I can make my living off the place, without going to work for other people. Mr. Ladley says he'll sell me that ten acres alongside of our pasture and barn-yard."

"I'll help you," said Letitia. "Next summer I think I can get a summer school, and make as much as fifty dollars in vacation. That would buy—what?"

"It would buy me a pair of colts, about eight months old, and I'd raise 'em!" cried Achilles. "O Letitia, if you could!"

"Come in to dinner," said Letitia, "your noon hour is half gone."

Achilles was working for Mr. Ladley building fence, and being nearer his own home than his employers, and, moreover, tempted by some dumplings which Mercy promised, he was to dine at home.

That afternoon, as Letitia and Mercy sat on the porch with their sewing, Letitia saw a gray man and a gray horse, coming at a steady pace up the road.

"Mother," she said, "there's the man I thought might be Uncle Barum!" She dropped her work and rose. Mercy rose also.

"It is! it is Uncle Barum! he shall not pass without speaking this time!" cried Mercy. And running into the road with Letitia, she held out both hands crying: "O Uncle Barum! stop! stop!"

Uncle Barum slowly turned the gray horse toward the block that Achilles had set for the convenience of Friend Amos Lowell, in mounting and dismounting.

"Yes, yes, Mercy," he said, "your house now looks fit for a decent man to come to."

As soon as he alighted, Mercy threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "O Uncle Barum, I have wanted so much to see you, for so long!"

"You took a precious poor way of showing it," said Uncle Barum.

"Come in, uncle, come right in," said Letitia.

"Yes, yes, now there is no one at this house

that I don't think unfit to meet," said Uncle Barum.

"I'll lead your horse around to the barn," said Letitia.

"No, you won't. I'll take him myself, and see what sort of a barn you keep," retorted the old man.

They let him go to the barn by himself, and they concluded from his stay there, and from seeing him walking about the barn-yard, examining the water-trough, and looking into the pig-pen and the chicken coops, that he was investigating their affairs.

Achilles had ordained that every day Samuel should gather up a certain amount of stones, draw them in his small hand-cart, and lay them up into a wall, which in the course of two or three years was to grow into a nice stone wall, cutting off a good field. Achilles was a great lad to plan for far-off consulates. It was thus that he accomplished so much. The old Saxon proverb, "Do the next thing," was deeply imbedded in his nature, and, as he told Samuel, it was step by step, and a little at a time, that did the work.

Samuel at his work beyond, and a little above

the barn-yard, saw and recognized the visitor. He dashed down to the barn and greeted him with childish rapture.

"O Uncle Barum! have you come? How long you have been! Did you know I expected you? Why didn't you come before? Is that your horse? You'll stay all night, won't you? Did you see mother? Wasn't she glad? Tish is home, did you know that? Now you'll see Kill, won't you? Uncle Barum, didn't I tell you our place had got to be real nice? Is it as nice as you thought it was?"

"Your tongue's hung in the middle more than I thought it was," said Uncle Barum gruffly. "Do you ever stop talking?"

"I don't know," said Samuel, a little non-plussed. "Yes, when I'm asleep—except sometimes; Kill says I talk in my sleep. He says mother oughtn't to let me eat so much supper. Do you think that's it, Uncle Barum?"

"I can't tell," said Uncle Barum, "I don't know much about children, but I hope you'll let your mother and sister get in a word edgewise, when we get to the house."

"Edgewise, what's that, about words, I mean?"

Uncle Barum groaned.

However, when they reached the house, Letitia gave Uncle Barum a rocking-chair and a glass of milk, and taking Samuel aside, instructed him to go to the barn-yard and kill and dress a chicken that had been fattened and reserved for some great occasion. What occasion could be greater than this visit of Uncle Barum? Samuel had been well instructed in this work of fowl-dressing, because Achilles had taken him during the winter holidays to help prepare fowls for the city market for Mr. Gardiner. He was careful but slow. Uncle Barum would have a respite.

Uncle Barum, sipping his milk, looked critically at his surroundings and at his niece.

"You've picked up here, Mercy," he said, "better than even I thought you would. I had heard of your improvements here, but they beat all I expected. Never would have thought you could do as well in four years. Shows what it is worth to cast the drink devil out of a family. I reckon if the Lord Christ was in the world, going about now, the most devils he'd have to cast out would be the whiskey ones. You've picked up yourself. You look more like old times than you did six years ago."

"I did not know you saw me six years ago, uncle."

"Yes I did. I've seen you more times than you thought. But after that scoundrel got his deserts, I just thought you had no one to hinder you, and if you wanted to see me you could come."

"I had no idea you would let me come, uncle."

"My latch-string has always been out for you, Mercy, whether you knew it or not," replied the old man.

"Uncle! I always knew you had the kindest heart! But I had four children."

"I had nothing against the children, Mercy. My quarrel was with the scoundrel!"

"Uncle," said Mercy, carefully ignoring his reference to her husband, "you were very good and kind to me, and I was very ungrateful and disobedient to you, and I have long wanted to ask you to forgive me. I did write you two or three letters, but you sent them back unopened."

"I wanted nothing to do with you, Mercy, so long as the cursed scoundrel was around," said Uncle Barum with great emphasis.

"After that, uncle, when I had so much trouble and poverty, I did not go to you, for I

thought you would believe it was not merely forgiveness but help I wanted. Now you see I am well, and comfortable here in my home, and we need nothing but what our hands can earn, and I can tell you how much I have repented, and ask you to say you forgive me."

She had her hand on her uncle's shoulder, as he sat in her big rocking-chair. Uncle Barum reached up and took her hand.

"Yes, yes, Mercy, I've forgiven you. I have nothing laid up against you or your children. That girl there looks very much like you when you were her age, but she looks, too, as if she had more sense than you had. I say, Letitia, if that's your name—I like it, too, for a name, it was my mother's—I say, you wouldn't run away to get married, would you? You wouldn't marry a scoundrel that drank, would you?"

Thus called upon to pass judgment on both her parents, poor Letitia turned crimson and tears stood in her eyes.

"No, she would not," said Mercy quietly, "there are some things which a girl can learn by her mother's experiences."

Uncle Barum pushed Mercy into a seat near him, and still held her hand. "What's a woman

get married for, any way, long as she's got some one to take care of her, and give her a home? What does she get by marrying, but hard work and no thanks for it, and a raft of children to share her troubles with. What did you get married for, Mercy?"


"Why, Uncle Barum," said Mercy firmly, "I loved Thomas. There was much in him to love. He was as promising a young man as there was in the county then. He loved me, and I loved him, and I do yet."

"Well, Mercy," said Uncle Barum with conviction, "you are a greater fool by a long shot than I thought you were! I always told your mother that that name she gave you would ruin you, and so it has. You are too soft for this world. You never could show proper respect for yourself in laying up an injury, you poor child!"

The tone of these last words, and the look that went with them, suggested to Letitia that Uncle Barum's heart was not nearly so fierce as his general language and demeanor.

"Mercy," said Uncle Barum, "when you ran off you left me no one to tie to but Cousin Sacy Terhune."

"I hope she has been good to you, uncle."



"So, so, as good as she knows how to be; she has an eye to the main chance, has Sacy, but she is a sensible woman."

"And she has nice children, I hope."

"Two children; the girl is about the age of Letitia here—Madge. I don't like her much, she's a proud chit. Don't speak to you, does she, Letitia? She always seems ashamed of the way I talk and dress. I tell her I wa'n't learned grammar the way she is, and I dress to suit myself. She says my old coat is horrid—it's a good coat. I've only had it five or six years, good, solid stuff. I mean to make it do me the rest of my days. She turns up her nose at it, and hopes I'll sell it for rags when I go to live in Ladbury. But my old coat will last me out, it is worth more than her popinjay fixin's, hey Letitia? What do you say?"

"I should say you had a right to wear what you pleased."

"Yes, yes; that's what I say. That's what Philip says. You remember Philip, Mercy? Little boy when you ran away. Now Philip Terhune is a young man worth owning. Twenty, Philip is. He lived with me from he was twelve to fifteen, and I never saw a better boy. Then he went to

Ladbury, to the High School, and—graduated, they call it—last year. Now he is with Homer Perkins, learning stock-raising. Philip Terhune will be about the best stock-raiser in this State. He has sense, and grit, and honor, and dash in him. If you had picked out such a lad as that, Mercy, I'd have put up with it, maybe. But there were no such lads in those days, and nothing would do you but the scoundrel, Mercy. I'm going to live in Ladbury. I shall hire that little house with the front yard full of roses—I always did like roses—and the pillars in the porch—the house Amos Lowell owns."

"Oh, that is such a pretty little place!" cried Letitia.

"Yes, yes; a pretty little place. Leased it for five years."

"Won't you miss the farm and be lonely in town, uncle?"

"I'll keep the farm and ride out there every day or two. I'll be busy in town. Jacob Terhune, Sacy's husband, has been appointed post-master at Ladbury. Did you know that, Mercy?"

"I saw it in the paper Mrs. Canfield lent me last night."

"Well, I'm going to help Jacob quite a good

bit in the post-office on busy days, and that will take my time, and I'll see my old friends to chat with. Sacy and Jacob will live the next block to me."

"I'm glad you won't be alone, uncle," said Mercy.

Samuel had thrust his curly head inside the door and announced to Letitia, "It's done." Letitia went out.

"Hurry and make the fire then," she said, "and then you may go and wash and dress clean for supper. Pick me first a few little flowers to put on the tea-table in a glass. I shall make it a party to-night, on account of Uncle Barum. How nice that you picked so many berries this morning! I will make some biscuit, and have fried chicken, and you can get me some cucumbers from the garden. I made a loaf of molasses cake this morning. I want Uncle Barum to know that we are as comfortable as we can be. Ah! there comes Patience from her sheep-earning. Now she can set the table, as soon as she has put on her pink frock and spoken to Uncle Barum."

Patty, being skillfully engineered around the house by Samuel, made her best toilet in the bedroom, and was duly presented to Uncle Barum,

who said she was a fine child, placed her on his knee, and kept her there so resolutely that Letitia had to set the table herself.

However, Samuel came down from his attic, washed and in a clean shirt-waist, and did her good service, his tongue flying as fast as his hands.

"Didn't I tell you Uncle Barum was nice? Ain't you glad he came? Did you think he would? Wasn't mother glad? Think he'll come again? Won't he think you know how to make a good supper! What do you s'pose Kill will say?" and so on.

Finally Achilles came and gave his grand-uncle manly welcome. Letitia announced supper, and gave Uncle Barum a seat by her side. Samuel was so well provided with good things that he was busy eating, but after five minutes silence he began: "Uncle Barum, I killed and plucked this chicken. It was a yellow one, Uncle Barum. Kill, do yellow chickens taste different from other chickens? Uncle Barum, don't 'Titia make nice biscuits? Uncle Barum, most usually we eat brown bread; we have biscuits on your account to-night. Uncle Barum, I picked these berries. Kill, I've got a dollar and

ninety cents laid up in my box now, from berries—strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries. Kill, if with the rest of the berries and nuts and mushrooms, I get four dollars, can't I buy one book after I get my cap and shoes, and those things, Kill?"

Finally, exhorted by all the family and threatened by "Kill," Samuel addressed himself sedulously to chicken and biscuit and subsided.

"Letitia, you are a good housekeeper," said Uncle Barum.

"She is that," said Mercy. "She can keep house as well as I can."

"Well, Mercy," said Uncle Barum, "you were ungrateful, and ran away with a great scoundrel——"

"Uncle Barum," said Achilles promptly, "the person you mean is my mother's husband and our father, so please do not say what you feel about him—before us."

Mercy and Letitia looked inexpressibly surprised at this new departure of Achilles; Uncle Barum gave a grim smile and concluded:

"Well, Mercy, you ran away, and left me alone. You say you are sorry. I give you a chance to show it. I am going to the village and I don't

want to live alone any longer. I want Letitia to come and live with me, as you ought to have done. She can go to school all the same and graduate, if that is what she wants. I think I have a better right to her than Friend Amos Lowell has."

"Friend Amos, Uncle Barum," spoke up Achilles, "was the first man to lend us a hand to help us up when we were flat down. But we owe you a good deal; you took care of our mother for over fifteen years, and were like a father to her."

Letitia was a girl of distinguished promptness; she looked at Achilles, and then at her mother, then at the old man.

"I will go, Uncle Barum," she said.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILD SAMUEL.

GREATLY to Samuel's disappointment Uncle Barum refused to stay all night; he said that he never slept out of his own house. Shortly after supper he asked Achilles to bring him his horse and he would be at home by nine o'clock. He bade them all good-by kindly, saying to Mercy:

"I have nothing against you any longer, Mercy." To Letitia he said, "You are like your mother when she was of your age, only you have more stability in you, I think. You shall never be sorry that you agreed to come and live with me."

"Letitia," said Samuel the next day, as he lay on the floor of the porch, resting himself from stone-wall building by kicking up his heels and rolling over and over, for Samuel was never still for long at a time, "do you think you'll have a nice time living with Uncle Barum?"

"Not so very nice, and not so very bad," said Letitia, who was making buttonholes.

"Why did you say you'd go?"

"I have to be somewhere in the village for three years, so that I can graduate and be able to get a certificate and teach. I don't feel as if I even earned my board at Friend Sara's, because she keeps a kitchen-girl, and all I do is to help sew and dust, and sweep a little. At Uncle Barum's I shall do a good deal, and earn my board and clothes. That will give mother and Achilles a chance to save more. Besides, Uncle Barum is old, and may soon be quite helpless; he took care of mother when she was little and helpless, and I think we ought to pay it back. It says, too, in the Bible, that if we don't care for our own flesh and kin, we are worse than infidels. I think I ought to go."

"Do you suppose he'll let you come home and see us?"

"Of course I shall come. That is my right and duty. I shall come often, and get Uncle Barum to come."

"Letitia, do you always do what you know is right?"

"I think I try to."

"Letitia, isn't it real hard sometimes to know what is right?"

"Sometimes it is, Samuel."

"Letitia, don't you think it's about right-doing as it is with the stones in the fence? Sometimes I don't know which ones I ought to put top, and which ones at the bottom. First I think one way is best, and then I think another is best. Sometimes I think one thing is right, then that something else would be righter."

"That must be about little things, Samuel; most things have the right and wrong in them clear and plain. It is right to speak the truth, to obey, and to be industrious, to keep Sabbath."

"Yes, 'course," said Samuel, "but, Letitia, don't you wish you had lived in the days when the Lord spoke out and told people clear and plain what He wanted? When He wanted Abraham to go away from his first home, He came and said 'Go.' When He wanted Moses to go to Egypt again, He said, 'Go,' and told Moses just what to do. Letitia, don't you wish those days were back? I do."

When Samuel thus began gravely with "Letitia" his sister understood that he had settled himself for a long conference on themes which were important to him.

"Friend Amos says the Bible is a clear guide-

book, Samuel, and that if we study it hard, we shall know what to do in all cases; he says we may not find out at once, but if we just keep on, the spirit of God will teach us, through the Word."

"Yes, Letitia, only you might think you had made yourself believe what you wanted to believe. We are made so queer in our inside minds, Letitia. If I don't want to come in from the pasture, and mother comes out and calls 'Sa-a-m-my,' I can most make myself hear her saying 'Pa-a-tty!' And then when I think how I am that way, and mother comes out and calls 'Pa-a-a-tty!' just as clear as day, I tell myself I am hearing wrong on purpose, and down I come to the house. Now when I am up in the field working, or out in the garden weeding, I think of these things. There's a big sumac bush up in the lot, and in the fall it is all as red as fire. I think it looks like the bush where God was, and I go stand before it, and wonder how Moses felt. Of course I do not play I am Moses, that would be wicked, but I think how contented Moses must have been to know. Then there's a rock in the pasture, a flat side rock, and I think it is like the rock Moses smote for water to come out,

and he must have been so glad to know he was doing just what God wanted, and had found just the right rock. When I sit on this porch at evening I think how happy Abraham must have felt in his tent-door, when he didn't know but any time when he lifted up his eyes he might see God coming to talk with him. And sometimes you know he did."

"It must have been very grand and beautiful," said Letitia.

"And, Letitia, sometimes it makes me feel lonesome and discouraged to think I must go through all my life, and get to be as old as Uncle Barum, and not see God at all."

"Of course we can't expect such things nowadays," said Letitia, who was without experiences.

Letitia did not know that in early childhood, the child who is taught about God, looking into the blue heavens, or wrapped in the solemn stillness of field or forest, or in the curtains of night, feels God just as closely near as Abraham or Moses did. Then youth, jocund and alert, full of curiosities and ambition, leaves this glory and clear faith of life's morning-land. Middle age, vexed with turmoils and cares, chilled by doubts,

expects but faint and far-off murmurs of the voice of God, and never counts on glimpses of His face. The dusty highway of life draws the soul from the Divine Companionship that is its heritage. But as calmer years come on and experiences grow deeper, and the gates that open into eternity draw near and yet more near, then, then indeed comes personally close to us One more faithful than any brother; the voice is heard clearly, "This is the way, walk ye in it," and the promise is fulfilled even to hoar hairs, "I will carry you." Then God is not afar off and silent, but near and speaks clearly.

Samuel was silent for a while, silent and quiet, watching the thin white clouds in the sky and absorbed in his visions. Letitia looked at him, wondering what this restless, busy, fluent little fellow would be. Suddenly, with a child's vivacious incontinuity, he changed the subject of conversation. A colt, ambling up the road by the side of its mother, had diverted his speculations.

"Letitia, Kill said you were going to earn some money next summer and help him buy two colts, and when he had growed them up he would be able to buy some more land and work for himself."

Poor Letitia! she suddenly felt as the milkmaid did when her basket of eggs fell to the ground, or as Alnaschar when he kicked over his basket of glass.

"O Samuel! I forgot that last night. When I am at Uncle Barum's I cannot do that; he will want me to stay there all the time and not go away for a vacation school. How disappointed Achilles will be!"

Samuel sighed. His brother was alike his ideal and his idol; if he wanted colts, why should he not have colts?

"Couldn't you earn money some way?" he asked, "sewing, or buttonholes?" He had often assisted the family councils as to ways and means.

"No, I couldn't," said Letitia. "If I am to graduate with a good standing, and be able to teach, I must work hard at my studies and not do things to interfere with them. I cannot study well unless I am well, and I must not take up work that would wear out my eyes or keep me up late at night. I am sure to keep Uncle Barum's house neat will take all the time I have to spare from my school work."

"I wish I could do it," said Samuel dolefully,

“but when I have got this mountain all picked clean of berries, nuts, sassafras, and blood-root, I shan’t have more than four dollars, and, Tish, it just seems as if I should die if I could not buy one book—one history book. There’s a time, Tish, when I don’t know what’s right. If some one would call out, ‘You’re a selfish boy, give Kill that money for colts,’ why I would. I’d give it all, cap, boots, book.”

“And all of it would do Kill very little good, and not go far toward buying colts,” said Letitia. “You must buy the cap, and the boots, and book, Samuel, surely, and I shall pick up a little money by Christmas and buy you another book, so you’ll have two whole new ones of your own.”

Achilles had not been a poor tutor of Samuel in athletic sports. Samuel, at the idea of two books, turned hand-springs all the way to the gate and back without stopping.

Uncle Barum had said that he should not move to Ladbury for four weeks, and that Letitia was not to come to him until his home was settled. He came up the mountain for another visit before he moved. He assumed a proprietorship in Letitia and seemed very cheerful.

"Oh, you'll find you don't lose by doing your duty by me, Letitia," he said. "Sacy Terhune says to me, 'You won't need to hire any one to help you move, now you've got that girl of Stanhope's.' I says to her, 'Sacy, didn't you hire help to move, although you've got that girl you call Madge?' No, Letitia, Sacy Terhune needn't think you're going to have things harder than Madge."

"I expect to work harder than Madge, uncle," said Letitia. "I have been brought up to it, and I expect to earn my living. She is with her own father and mother, and that is different. Mother told you I couldn't wash and iron, she thought that would be too hard, but I can do all the rest. I don't want you to speak as if I went to you because I expect to make anything by it. I go because you are our uncle, and were good to mother, and you ought not to live alone, and as I must live somewhere it is better to help you."

"Oh, that's right, Letitia," said Uncle Barum, "and I'll do well by you. That saucy chit, Madge, shan't lord it over you. Don't you worry over getting clothes. We'll see what Madge has, and I'll get you just as good as she has. I know

them. I heard Sacy Terhune say to Madge once, 'Don't be so sarcy,' she says, 'to your Uncle Barum, or he won't leave you a cent;' and I heard her say the other day, 'Now your Uncle Barum's gone and taken up with Letitia Stanhope, when he might have set store on you if you hadn't been so sarcy about his grammar and his clothes,' she says."

"Uncle Barum," said Letitia, "I wish you wouldn't vex yourself about what Madge Terhune says about me. I don't mind. I don't want to be dressed as Madge is. Her father has money and gets a good salary, and Madge has much nicer clothes than I ought to wear. I don't want to be dressed fine while my mother and the rest of them must be so plain and poor. They are comfortable, and that is all I want to be. If I can be tidy and have whole shoes and a neat print dress for warm weather, and a good dark woolen for winter I don't want anything else better, until I earn it by teaching, and then whatever I buy for myself I'll buy for my mother."

"Well now, Letitia," said Uncle Barum, "you take your own way, you've got a level head. I wonder that scoundrel could have had a daughter

with so much sense. And don't you knuckle down to Madge Terhune!"

"I think she is a real nice, bright, pretty girl, uncle," said Letitia, "and if she wants to be friends with me, I'm ready; if she don't, I don't think it will harm me any."

"Her brother," said Uncle Barum, "is made of very different timber. I never saw a nicer chap than Philip. After one year more where he is, he is going to set up a stock farm for himself over on my place. He's going to lease the place of me and pay me rent. I don't go for giving up my property while I'm alive; but after I'm dead—which I don't reckon'll be very soon, for I come of long-lived stock—Philip is to have that place. I promised Sacy Terhune that when she let me have Philip when he was a little fellow. You ran away and left me and the place, Mercy."

"I know I did, uncle. You are quite right to dispose of it just as you choose," said Mercy quietly; but perhaps her fingers flew a little faster over her work, and perhaps she had been hoping that now Uncle Barum was again friendly, and had seen what nice boys she had, he would have left one of them that dear old farm. But then she had forfeited all claim upon Uncle

Barum, and hating Thomas Stanhope as vigorously as he did, was it likely that he would leave property to one of Thomas Stanhope's children?

No doubt Mercy was secretly disappointed; she had thought what a nice little property that Titus farm would be for Achilles or Samuel. Uncle Barum seemed grimly fond of Samuel. As for Philip Terhune, Mercy only remembered him as a plump, yellow-headed little boy, who was always on hand when apple-turnovers or ginger-cookies were under way.

Uncle Barum looked closely at Mercy and Letitia when he spoke of the destination of the Titus farm. Mercy, trained by long adversity, concealed her thoughts. Letitia had nothing to conceal. Uncle Barum's property had not been a factor in her future. Uncle Barum hugged himself and chuckled, "You'll be all right, Letitia, you'll be all right if you don't have any nonsense about you."

Finally the day came when Letitia was to go to Uncle Barum. Achilles borrowed Mr. Canfield's carry-all, and the whole family accompanied Letitia and a little chintz-covered box which contained her meagre wardrobe.

Uncle Barum made festa to greet them. He

had engaged the woman who had settled and cleaned his house to prepare a good dinner of roast beef, vegetables, and pie. He led all the Stanhopes to the sunniest room in the house, which, though small, was fresh and pretty in a new paper and new paint. This was to be Letitia's room, and tears filled Mercy's eyes as she noted that the single bed, the splint-bottomed chairs, the rugs, the tidies, the work-bags and basket, the little toilette-table were all those which she had used, made, and adorned while she lived with Uncle Barum. Uncle Barum had, however, added an ingrain carpet and a cretonne window-curtain, also a set of hanging-shelves.

"Do you like it?" asked the old man eagerly.

"Oh, very much indeed!" cried Letitia; "thank you, uncle."

"Sacy Terhune said it was plenty good, but Sacy's no rule. If you want anything more, speak out, you shall have it!"

"It is enough, and good enough," said Letitia. "You bought that wash-stand set from Friend Amos, didn't you? I liked it so much when it came to the store."

"He told me you did," said Uncle Barum. "Now, Letitia, there is a closet for your clothes."

Let your mother help you to get settled, and then come down to dinner. I don't want you to run away from this room. When you get married, I want it to be in the parlor downstairs to a man I'll pick out for you." •

"You are looking almost too far ahead, uncle," said Letitia.

When Uncle Barum and the boys went downstairs, Mercy sat in the little old rocking-chair and cried. These simple furnishings so recalled the past. What bright dreams she had dreamed among them, dreams of Thomas Stanhope, who had seemed to her all that was noble and attractive. How little she had foreseen the bitter sorrows through which she must pass, and how these insensate furnishings should be witness of her worse than widowed tears when Thomas was serving out a ten years' sentence in the penitentiary.

On that day when she had forsaken Uncle Barum's honest home for Thomas, that sin of Thomas' life appeared only as a little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, but it had swiftly enlarged until it had covered all her horizon and deluged her life with tears.

Letitia seemed to understand her mother's

tears. She did not interfere with her, but quietly put away her clothing and pushed the chintz-covered box before the window for a seat. Then she said:

"Come, mamsey, bathe your face, and let us go down and do honor to Uncle Barum's dinner. Seems to me Uncle Barum is much more liberal than I supposed he was from what you had said."

"He is more liberal than he used to be, I think," said Mercy.

On the whole, that was a very pleasant day at Uncle Barum's. Samuel's mouth was kept so full of goodies that he could not deafen the family with talking. Achilles observed Uncle Barum closely, and being a long-headed youth and given to planning, he divined Uncle Barum's plans afar off. But he concluded that it would be best to say nothing about them.

After dinner Uncle Barum presented Mercy, Letitia, and Patience each with a new dress, and gave the boys each a silver dollar.

"Let's keep 'em to start the colts!" cried Samuel.

Then Uncle Barum inquired into matters, and heard from Samuel the story of the desired colts.

"Oh, ho!" he said, "colts, eh, and more land?"

Well, it ain't well to get on too fast, folks gets too high-strung sometimes."

Before the family party broke up, Uncle Barum took down his big Bible and had prayers. He did not realize why worship seemed to him more sweet and hearty than it had for years. It was because the bitterness cherished against Mercy was all gone, and for the time his bitterness against Thomas was forgotten.

After Letitia was gone, Mercy missed a confidant in her plans for the future when Thomas should be free. Only five years and a half more now, and how would life go then? She took Samuel into her confidence.

"Of course father must live here, right with us, and we'll be real good to him, and he'll be good to us," said Samuel.

"Achilles would never hear to it," said the mother. .

"I'll pray God every day to make Kill all right," replied Samuel.

CHAPTER XIII.

A THANKSGIVING DAY.

AFTER Letitia went to live with Uncle Barum the friendship of the old man for his niece and her family increased; he often drove out to the cottage with Letitia to take tea, or spend part of a Saturday. He never failed to say something to indicate his settled animosity to Thomas Stanhope, but was all kindness toward Mercy and her children.

He gave them no presents; giving was not in Uncle Barum's line, and what he did for Letitia was a great straining of his natural disposition. Two forces were at work within him where Letitia was concerned.

He had become irritated against Sacy Terhune and her daughter Madge, because of certain exhibitions of insolence and greed. But in the days of his first wrath against Mercy, Sacy Terhune had been very attentive and sympathetic to him, and had known how to turn his anger against

her cousin to the benefit of herself. She had secured the promise of the Titus farm for Philip, her son, and various pledges in her own behalf.

As for Philip, Uncle Barum heartily loved the lad, and did not repent that he was to heir the Titus farm. But Uncle Barum was growing weary of Sacy and her greed and little follies, and when Samuel's visit had drawn his attention to his niece and her family, he had begun to consider how he might outgeneral Sacy and benefit Mercy.

He planned about this with the obstinacy and secrecy of a crafty old man verging on his second childhood. He visited the High School and studied Letitia attentively; he talked with Friend Amos Lowell about her, and at last he had moved to the village, and she had come to live with him as a daughter.

Letitia was not the only cause of his coming to the village. Uncle Barum's health was failing; he had sudden attacks of acute pain, and he wanted to be near the physician who could relieve him; also, he was fond of Mr. Terhune, Sacy's husband, and liked to spend hours of busy idleness in the post-office with him.

The longer Letitia lived with Uncle Barum the

better he liked her; she had good executive abilities, was economical and neat, and a most excellent little housekeeper; pretty and pleasing in appearance and manners, very saving in her expenditures, but always guided by good taste in color and in style of her dress; cheerful and sympathetic, Letitia soon became, even more than her mother had been, the apple of the old man's eye; she was the treasure of his age. When he was gloomy she talked cheerfully, when he was ill she made him comfortable and invented little treats to encourage his appetite. She persuaded him to indulge in the great luxuries of a wadded wrapper, a warm bright afghan, a pair of quilted slippers. She read his paper to him; and when she came in from school or from doing an errand, she told him all the little incidents of the day: what she had seen, what such and such people had said and done, the bits of news floating about the little town.

The ability thus to bring home to an invalid or elderly person the life that ebbs and flows beyond them is a great gift which young people should cultivate. Some pride themselves on going out and observing and gathering into themselves all that is of interest, and then coming home silent,

uncommunicative, sharing nothing, while there may be near them those who could be put in helpful touch with outer life by graphic recital and generous information.

There is a little quoted text which might be made well to apply to many people and many circumstances: "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." Here we note that Israel is empty; not because he has no fruit, but because his is selfish fruit. That rich man of the parable who had such a large "my" in all his planning, was another of these selfish capitalists.

Letitia, keeping Uncle Barum's house, going to school, comforting the old man's age, and daily becoming dearer to him, found her life full and happy, and was constantly planning some little present or surprise for the family at the cottage. Sacy Terhune and Madge, won by her even disposition and firm, steadfast kindness, soon tolerated her, and were pleasant enough to her when they came over to see Uncle Barum.

Sacy, it is true, never suffered the old man to forget Letitia's paternity.

"Too bad such a nice sort of girl is burdened with a father in the penitentiary." "Never can

be anybody, of course, with such a father behind her." "I knew long ago how Thomas Stanhope would turn out, and I warned Mercy, but Mercy was always stubborn." "If Stanhope gets out of prison, I reckon he will come hanging around you on account of Letitia, Cousin Titus." "Of course Mercy will take him back, and things will go to the dogs just as they did before. Mercy is just so foolish."

Sacy Terhune was not careful to say these pleasant things out of Letitia's hearing. Uncle Barum never resented them; he would nod his old gray head with a little chuckle. He was thinking how he should outgeneral Cousin Sacy.

After November set in, Cousin Sacy came over one day and said:

"Cousin Titus, I want you should come and take dinner with us on Thanksgiving. We'll have a tip-top dinner."

"And what will Letitia do?" asked Uncle Barum.

"Oh, Letitia!" said Cousin Sacy, taken rather aback, for Madge had strenuously objected even to Uncle Barum himself. "He will come in his old-fashioned clothes, with that bottle-green faded overcoat, and we are to have village

company," Madge had said. How would Madge put up with the added burden of the convict's daughter?

"Letitia! why of course she can come if you want to bring her; but I thought Letitia would prefer to go out home for Thanksgiving."

"So she does; yes, yes, so she does, Cousin Sacy, and I'm going with her," said the old man; "yes, yes."

"And you won't come to us, then? You are getting very much taken up with Thomas Stanhope's family, seems to me."

"It is Mercy's family, Thomas counts out now," said Uncle Barum crossly; "but it is true I'm fond of Mercy and her children—nice children; still, I shan't forget all I promised you, Sacy, so don't fret."

This consoled Cousin Sacy, and after all it was a relief to have Cousin Titus go somewhere else for his Thanksgiving. Madge would like it better. Madge thought Cousin Titus ill-dressed and uncouth. Uncle Barum nodded and chuckled some time after Sacy went away.

In the very midst of his joyful meditations Achilles came in. Achilles was hauling corn to the station for Mr. Canfield; he had stopped for

a minute or two. The day was frosty, and he sat down by Uncle Barum's little open fire. The room was sunny, and Letitia had some thrifty plants in the window.

"You look real comfortable here, Uncle Barum," said Achilles.

"Yes, yes; Letitia is a good girl and keeps us very nice. Achilles, we are coming out to spend Thanksgiving with you."

"Why so!" cried Achilles, "that is just what I stopped in to talk about. Mother sent me to ask you to come. We have been thinking about it all summer. Patty will contribute the turkey; she found a little half-drowned turkey-chick in a rain last spring, and brought it to life, and Mrs. Gardiner gave it to her. She has raised it with care, and it is a fine, fat bird; she is going to have that for our dinner. And Samuel has a store of maple sugar of his own cooking, and pop-corn of his own raising, and nuts of his own picking, and dried berries for sauce, which he picked also. Our garden has given us plenty of potatoes, squash, onions, and cabbage; so you see, Uncle Barum, we can invite you to quite a feast. You'll enjoy seeing our poultry and our pigs, and Patty's new sheep."

Uncle Barum observed Achilles closely; he liked the youth's hardy independence, and bluff honesty of bearing; he had not the genial graciousness of Philip Terhune. Achilles had had the world to fight, and with heavy odds against him; there was a spice of defiant self-assertion in the keen glance of his gray eyes, the alertness of his demeanor, the set of his broad shoulders. Evidently he was one able to make a way for himself; steadfast, strong, his aim fixed, the future ever before him, despising all the hardness and roughness of the present for the better days that should be.

In hard labor Achilles had now reached manly size and strength, brown and brawny, looking as if his next birthday might rather be his twenty-fourth, than his nineteenth.

"You've pushed yourselves on pretty well since you got rid of your father, Achilles," said Uncle Barum.

Achilles frowned. He did not like these references to his parent, although he often said to himself that he had no toleration at all for his father. He replied roughly:

"Father had only one fault; let him alone."

"It was such a big fault that it swallowed all

his virtues up, and brought in all other faults along with it. I tell you, Achilles, that drunkenness is a fault which makes all other faults seem little alongside of it."

"It's queer to me, then," said Achilles, "that folks that think that way of drinking, don't do all they can against it. I've heard you don't vote for prohibition, or even for local option."

"I don't believe in coercing people. You can't make people right unless they want to be right. The Lord looks on the heart."

"But it is the outward act that does the mischief to their families and neighbors," said Achilles, "and though you can't make them right, you can take away the chance of their being wrong. A man may want to burn my house over me, but if he is shut up so close he can't do it, my roof's safe over my head. In this country it is often only a prison or a lunatic asylum, that can be safe for unlucky men who are born with a craze for strong drink."


"I see," said Uncle Barum, "you're all like your mother, willing to let Thomas Stanhope come back and ruin you all."

"Here's one that isn't," said Achilles. "Well,

I'll tell mother that you and Tish will come early on Thanksgiving and stay all day?"

That was a pleasant Thanksgiving at the cottage on the mountain. Uncle Barum opened his heart and sent out a barrel of flour and half a barrel of sugar as a present to Mercy. Letitia had made a white apron for Patience, and one for her mother, and a necktie each for Achilles and Samuel. Letitia had very little pocket-money; it scarcely ever occurred to Uncle Barum that his niece might like a few pennies for her own. Once in a while he gave her a quarter "for a pocket-piece." It was as much as Letitia could do to find a nickel for the contribution plate. But Letitia had taken a leaf out of her mother's book; she devoted from nine to ten each evening to knitting or crochet-work for Miss Henry's little fancy-goods shop, and so, a dime at a time, she had her small store to give presents to her family. Samuel should not be without his book at Christmas.

Ever since Thomas Stanhope had been in prison he had sent his wife a letter to reach her on Thanksgiving Day. Mr. Gardiner always went for the mail, and saw that Mercy had her letter. Poor Mercy! she knew that only violent hatred




for Thomas filled Uncle Barum's soul, and Achilles asserted only suspicion and antagonism. They would have no confidence in Thomas' kind words, repentant moans, promises of future well-doing, assertions of the great goodness the Lord had shown to his soul. But Letitia could sympathize, and she and Mercy went into the little bed-room and read the letter and cried over it, and then comforted each other, and said how much better it was to be penitent, God-fearing, and safe in a prison, than sinning and using liberty only as an injury to one's self and others.

Samuel also came to hear the letter. As for Patty, she had forgotten all about her father. He had passed away with the discomforts and terrors of her sickly infancy, and now the robust, rosy child never gave him a thought. She sat on Uncle Barum's knee and entertained him with accounts of what they did in school and what they played at recess.

It was Samuel who brought a note of discord into the family peace that day. They were having after dinner that final course of nuts, maple sugar, and pop-corn, provided by Samuel's industry, when that nimble-tongued child remarked:

"Thanksgiving is the day when I like to eat my dinner, and don't feel that sort of mean and bad when I have anything good; because, you see, on Thanksgiving they let father have a right good dinner. They give him turkey and potatoes and gravy, and pies."

"They always give him a long sight better than he deserves," said Uncle Barum angrily. "I don't know what the world is coming to, the way they pamper prisoners and paupers. It is just putting a premium on idleness and rascality, and that is all there is about it. If people are too loafing and shiftless to support themselves, they are sent to the almshouse; and the almshouse must be a splendid cut-stone palace, with an army of officers, bath-rooms, fine grounds, where the lazy louts can live in splendor. If a man robs and burns and assaults his neighbors, breaks into their stores or houses at dead of night, fires on 'em with intent to kill, he is sent to a penitentiary where there can't be things good enough for him. He must have his swell dinners on Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Fourth of July. He must have his library, and his flowers from the flower-mission, and as many fol-de-rols as if he was a saint or a martyr. I



don't believe in that. Honest people are taxed to pamper idiots and paupers and criminals. Then they tell how penitent they are, and they behave well because they can't get a chance to behave ill; and people tell how they are reformed, and they are made much of, and are pardoned out—to turn blacklegs as soon as they get out. That is the way with you, Mercy: you are well rid of Thomas Stanhope; if he came back he would riot away all you have scraped together, he would abuse and wreck you all; but you don't consider that. You cry over him, you want to see him. I never saw such a pack of idiots as you all are! What good did he ever do one of you? Not one bit of good. Bah! I don't believe in spoiled prisoners. I think that they should all be kept on bread and water, and hard work eighteen hours in the day, and the sooner it killed them the safer their families and neighbors would be."

Uncle Barum became very much excited as he spoke. He shook his fist, was red in the face, and frightened Patty so that she burst into tears and crouched down under the table. This incident stoppped the tide of Uncle Barum's eloquence.

The family were silent. Uncle Barum was aged, Mercy had ill-treated him once. He had been good to her in the old times, and to all of them of late. Samuel presently spoke up, out of the depths of his eleven-years-old scholarship.

"Uncle Barum, you are like the man named Draco, that I read about in my teacher's history book. He thought that everybody ought to have their head cut off that did anything."

This lame remark was accepted by Uncle Barum with enthusiasm. "So they ought; so they ought; yes, yes, serve 'em right."

But the profound silence about the table did not suit the irate old man. He pushed back his chair and glared at the Stanhope family.

"What would you do? I say what would you do, Mercy, if that Thomas of yours was let loose? Would you let him go to the dogs alone, as fast as he could, as you ought, or would you go to the dogs with him?"

"I should try to keep him from going to the dogs, uncle."

"You tried when you were first married, didn't you? Much you made by it! Try it again, would you? Say, would you?"

"I think I should give him a chance, uncle,

to bring forth fruits meet for the repentance which he professes to feel," said Mercy.

"Letitia, what do you say to such nonsense?"

"I think my mother is right, Uncle Barum."

"Samuel, you speak your mind, are you as idiotic?"

"I'd be just as good to him as ever I knew how," cried Samuel. "I ask God every night to bless him, and what sense is in that, if I wouldn't try to bless him myself?"

Patience being still under the table weeping, was not called on for a vote in this family conclave. Uncle Barum turned to Achilles, seated at the head of the table, his brow bowed, his face dark.

"Well, Achilles, you are the head of the house, let us hear from you," said the inquisitor.

"The time has not come for us to do anything," said Achilles looking up, "and I don't see the sense in worrying my mother by talking of what may never happen. But I say one thing: mother has had all the beggary, and misery, and misuse that is ever going to come into her life. Forgiving is not forgetting, and if mother is too kind-hearted to protect herself and the children, I'll do it for her. Our home shall not be made a den

any more. No drunkard shall cross that door-sill ever again." He straightened himself and held out his arm, manly and muscular, in his suit of gray homespun. "Thank God, I'm a man now, and a strong one, and God has set me to protect this family from themselves and every one else, and so I will!"

He pushed back his chair from the table and went out to the barn. Mercy went to her bedroom to finish her cry, Letitia pulled Patty from under the table, and told her to begin to wash the dishes.

"Samuel," she said, "do your chores and learn not to talk so much."

The Thanksgiving dinner was over.

Uncle Barum went out to Achilles. The boy's spirit pleased him. "Achilles," he said, "I see you do not mean to allow your father back here."

"No, I don't. I must protect my mother and the kids, and I have no faith in father's penitence. He can't behave."

"I'll tie to you any day," said the admiring uncle. "You have good horse sense. I say, Achilles, I mean to give you a colt that I have on my farm. You shall have it in the spring."

CHAPTER XIV.

UNCLE BARUM'S LITTLE SCHEME.

It occurs both to families and individuals that after a period of storm and excitement and adventure, when every day was marked by some new event, comes a lull in life—a time of peace. Day follows day, season succeeds to season, with little to distinguish it among its fellows. The lapse of time is so calm and uneventful that we scarcely know that it has gone by us. Suddenly we find that a change has come; we cannot mark the day or the hour; we must observe long periods to see that there is change at all.

The children have grown up, it seems. Was it not yesterday that dolls and marbles engrossed them, and now dolls and marbles are forgotten. The trees that we set as saplings so little time ago spread wide branches and bear fruit. We, ourselves, have changed; gray hairs are here and there upon us and we know it not.

Thus it was at the home of the Stanhopes after

Letitia went to Uncle Barum. Many things happened, but so quietly and such small things individually, that time seemed to be like some still stream that scarcely had a current. The vines and the trees grew, the fowls increased, there were two cows and a two-year-old colt in the barn-yard; the house had a coat of buff paint with dark trimmings, the dormer window had been put in the roof, and a square bay window in the sitting-room for mother's winter flowers.

Letitia had graduated at the High School, and had taken her place as teacher in the primary room in the Ladbury school. Samuel, at twelve, had passed through all the classes of the school-house on the mountain, and Uncle Barum had taken him into his house and sent him to the High School. Patience went alone now to the mountain school. Achilles worked as hard as ever, but for higher wages; he had enough money laid by with Friend Amos Lowell to buy a wagon, a plough, and a horse. In another year he meant to make the first payment on ten acres more of land and begin work for himself.

That secret fund of Mercy's had become nearly seventy dollars, and the hoard of treasures for Letitia, when she should marry, and for that

little home which she should have with Thomas, had grown until the trunk was well filled. And now when April came again, Thomas would have been eight years a prisoner. When any one mentioned the swiftly lessening years of that long sentence, Achilles set his lips more firmly and his brow contracted; he felt that the hour of trouble and action drew on apace.

With all these changes Uncle Barum had changed. He had grown old fast, and the disease that preyed upon him, and at times racked him, had a deeper hold. While in many respects as bright as ever, Uncle Barum was in some things growing childish and losing clearness of thought. This must be remembered as serving to excuse him in some little measure for a singular course of action.

Some one has said of a captious and contrary Christian that "Divine grace is sometimes grafted upon a crab-tree." Crab-tree Christians are by no means unusual specimens. Uncle Barum was undoubtedly one of them. Naturally of a selfish disposition, setting his wishes and his own comfort first in his thoughts, and unused to any self-sacrifice, the older Uncle Barum grew the more he was his own object in life. Whatever crossed

his wishes was unendurable, whoever opposed him was unforgivable; in following out his own ends the boundaries between right and wrong were in his mind to some extent obliterated. He wished people to live according to the lines he laid down for them, and to be happy in his way only. It was this long-nourished perversity, and this growing childishness and feebleness of mind which led Uncle Barum to a course of action which, if discovered and brought to judgment, might have landed him in the penitentiary beside the despised and hated Thomas.

The return of Thomas Stanhope became a nightmare to Uncle Barum's soul. The cottage on the mountain was now an abode of peace and plenty; why should Thomas return to share a prosperity for which he had never labored, to disgrace his children by the presence of a felon father, to return to his carousing, and wasting, and idleness, and make discord where now was harmony? Uncle Barum resolved that Thomas must not return. Did he wish to be meeting that felon in the street? Should Thomas, the ex-convict, come to Uncle Barum's respectable home to see Letitia and Samuel, ask to share Letitia's salary, perhaps demand that Samuel should leave

school and go to work for him? Whatever could prevent such a turn in affairs must be just and right.

The return of Thomas Stanhope would, no doubt, militate against a plan which Uncle Barum had much at heart, and which he had formed so long ago as the night when Samuel, a self-invited guest, slept in the house marked by the red-and-blue rooster.

The Titus farm was promised to Philip Terhune, and was willed to him. To Sacy Terhune Uncle Barum had solemnly promised to give all his store of government bonds. Desires to help Mercy, and to have one of Mercy's blood enjoy the farm first cleared and settled by Mercy's great-grandfather, had tugged at Uncle Barum's heart. He had devised this plan of accomplishing his desires. Philip Terhune should marry Letitia Stanhope, and so Letitia should find her home in what had originally been intended for Mercy's inheritance.

When Philip Terhune took the Titus farm in possession, Uncle Barum visited him at least twice a week, and usually took Letitia with him on Saturday. On Sunday he was ready to dispute with Sacy for the possession of her son for

dinner. He praised Philip to Letitia, and Letitia to Philip; in fact this old man, who had laid down as a positive decree for his niece Mercy that she should never marry, had now, in behalf of his grand-niece, become a genuine match-maker. Meanwhile Philip was all engrossed with his stock-farm and Letitia with her school-studies, and neither of them had any thought to spare for the other.

Achilles, the planner, had discovered from afar this little scheme and had said nothing. It might be a very good scheme indeed. He had heard of Philip Terhune that he was one of the best respected young men in the county.

Sacy Terhune was the next one to descry Uncle Barum's intentions, and she took umbrage at once. The idea of her Philip being expected to marry the daughter of a felon—a girl without a penny! When Philip married, he should choose a girl of good family and some property. Such a young man as Philip should do well when he married; and to do well in Sacy's dictionary was defined to marry some one with a little money. Sacy, as a girl, had been somewhat jealous of Mercy, Barum Titus' prospective heiress; she had made good use of her opportuni-

ties to supplant Mercy, and therefore liked her less than ever.

As an antidote to Uncle Barum's praises of Letitia, Sacy Terhune began to make invidious criticisms upon her to Philip.

"Silly girl," "sly girl." "Those Stanhopes were a weak set like their good-for-nothing father before them." "She did not see what Barum Titus found in Tish to take his fancy so." "For her part she should think if the girl had any feelings, she would hide away in the country, and not show herself in town, flaunting about as if she were as good as anybody, and her father in the penitentiary!"

Now when strictures are so excessive and unjust, they usually inspire a right-minded hearer to take up the defensive, and so it happened in this case. Philip honestly endeavored to make his mother see that Letitia was a very nice girl, doing exactly what she ought to do, and most unexceptionable and admirable in her behavior.

Descanting on this, he did not convince his mother, but thoroughly convinced himself, and from not thinking about Letitia at all, began to think about her a great deal in the most admiring fashion. Driven to scrutinize her conduct

and position, he proceeded to see that there was no girl in the town, or even in the county, to be compared with her.

Sacy saw that she was by no means furthering her ends by decrying Letitia to Philip; moreover, her husband, to whom she unfolded her suspicions and complaints, stoutly insisted that Letitia was the very nicest kind of a girl, and that any mother ought to be thankful if her son could secure such a wife.

Who could tell, moreover, what Uncle Barum would do for Letitia? The old man was stubborn and crafty, and if he were antagonized and thwarted, might revoke any will he had made in favor of Philip or Sacy. Thus Mrs. Terhune was led to see that there were two sides to this question of Letitia's eligibility in a matrimonial way, and as, in spite of herself, she could not help a certain liking for one so uniformly kind, respectful, and helpful as Letitia, she relapsed into the position of a silent observer of events.

Uncle Barum now began to mature his plans. Philip was showing the most praiseworthy docility in regard to falling in love with Letitia, and Letitia showed no aversion to Philip. What was now necessary was to break off all communication

between the prisoner and his family, and hinder Thomas Stanhope's return to Ladbury. There was now and then a hint given by well-meaning people that Thomas' sentence would be shortened on account of his excellent behavior.

Uncle Barum knew when and how often Thomas wrote to Mercy, and when Mercy replied. He had now been frequently in the post-office for several years assisting Postmaster Terhune, and as Uncle Barum was one of the most highly esteemed citizens of the county, it never occurred to Mr. Terhune that the old man would nefariously interfere with the mail. Barum Titus liked to help distribute the mail; he enjoyed gathering the letters into packets for the mail-bag, why not let him do it? Old men have but few pleasures. Who guessed Uncle Barum's little scheme?

Uncle Barum concluded in the first place to sequester Thomas Stanhope's letter to his wife and then the letter which she would inevitably write to him. Then he would watch the mail to see if Mercy wrote to the chaplain, or the chaplain to Mercy. Then he would remove from the mail a second pair of letters, and then if Thomas was so regardless of decency as to drive him to extremities by not dying, as a convict ought to

die, Uncle Barum meant to write him a letter which would prevent his ever returning to Ladbury. He meant to write Thomas that Mercy had accepted her privilege of divorce, and had re-married. After that, Thomas would surely communicate no more with Ladbury.

It was the clumsiest possible scheme, the product of a mind grown childish and futile. Uncle Barum did not consider the infinite probabilities that so poor a plan would fall to pieces like a wall laid up without mortar. It did not occur to him that the chaplain might write to Friend Amos Lowell or the minister about this step taken by Mercy; it did not enter his mind that further proof of a divorce and a marriage would be required than a single letter. He never thought that, if long silence fell, Mercy might go to the penitentiary herself, or send Samuel, who was past thirteen, and fully able to go on such an errand. All these little points escaped the dull mind of Uncle Barum, and his clumsy plan succeeded, perhaps, in very virtue of its rudeness and stupidity. It seemed that as an invention, a plan must have been more neatly put together, and this being so rude must be truth.

Uncle Barum, with some moral misgivings,

began to execute his plan in the November after Letitia graduated and Samuel had come to live with him, when Thomas had been in prison seven years and a half. His hand trembled a little as he subtracted that penitentiary letter from the mail and slipped it into his coat-pocket. It trembled yet more when, alone at night by his open fire, he drew it from his pocket and committed it to the flames. He knew he was all wrong, but he said:

“It is for Mercy’s good—and then, they have not seen each other for seven years and nine months, and of course they have nearly forgotten; and then, Mercy has her children, she cares only for them.”

O Uncle Barum! you did not forget Mercy in seven years and nine months; did you not for seventeen years “keep your latch-string out,” and long for your exile’s return? Uncle Barum could not say his prayers that night; somehow the words would not come. The poor old gray head tossed and turned uneasily on that prayerless pillow, but his last whisper was: “It is all for the good of Mercy and her children.” For them he was willing to endure even the upbraidings of his conscience.

Poor Uncle Barum! he had nurtured his mind in crookedness so long that now, what to most would have seemed a very plain case, based on such simple fundamental truths as, "it is wrong to lie, it is wrong to steal," was to him as complex as to the veriest casuist of them all.

It was not quite so hard to purloin Mercy's letter. Was not Mercy his niece? was he not as a father to her? He had a right to what was hers, and to interfere to prevent her injuring herself. Besides, if he did not secrete Mercy's letter, all that trouble about the letter of Thomas was clearly thrown away. Therefore Mercy's letter went not into the mail-bag but into the pocket of Uncle Barum's faded bottle-green great-coat from which he never parted, and from the coat-pocket it too dropped among the red embers in the grate.

Now must the vigilance of Uncle Barum be unceasing. At what minute might not his plan be defeated. He got all the information he could through Letitia and Samuel, and learned that Mercy meant to write to the chaplain if she did not hear from Thomas by Christmas. She wrote—and Uncle Barum burned a third letter. It

was Mercy's, he had a right; he only wished he had shot that Thomas Stanhope years ago. But then if Thomas had been shot, and Mercy had never married, he would not have had Letitia and Samuel to cheer him, and where would Philip Terhune have found a wife? But if he had never seen them, would he ever have missed them or wanted them? Probably not. Entangled in the meshes of these thoughts, he sat long by his fire. He did not try to say his prayer when he went to bed. He knew now that it took him about a week to recover so far from the sacrifice of each letter that he could say his prayers.

Now, as time passed by, and Mercy began to grow uneasy at not hearing from Thomas, Uncle Barum had to invent many reasonings and arguments to explain to her this silence. He had also to suggest to the minds of Letitia and Achilles various lines of thought by which they were to brace up the mind of their mother to endure this silence. Then evidently Thomas became as uneasy as Mercy, and a letter quite out of the usual time came from him, and was burned, and then there was a letter from the chaplain to

Mercy which was also sequestered, and Uncle Barum felt as if he had no peace night or day, because of the unexpected and disorderly coming of these letters.

"Mother is talking of going to the penitentiary for a visit to find out about father," said Achilles. "I don't want her to do it. The idea of mother going there to see a convict in a two-colored suit. I can't stand it."

"Don't you let her go," said Uncle Barum anxiously. "You can see how it is. Thomas had lost all care or feeling for any of you long before he went there. Now he sees the time coming on when he will be free, and he means to slide off somewhere away from all of you, among folks that don't know he has been a felon."

"Perhaps that will be the best end of it," said Achilles gloomily.

"As soon as he comes out he'll take to drink again."

"I'm afraid so," said Achilles.

"The law's all wrong, all wrong," said Uncle Barum excitedly. "Prisoners ought never to be allowed to write to their families. The very fact of getting to a penitentiary ought to divorce a

man at once. After that he should have no family and no friends. And when a man is like Thomas Stanhope, and cannot keep sober a minute unless he is in jail, then he ought to be kept in jail all the time."

"I have often thought the laws were not what they should be," said Achilles. "It seems to me drunkenness itself should be a misdemeanor and punished. I think a man has no right to destroy his own body, property, and brain, any more than he has to destroy his neighbors. A man belongs partly to the state and community, and he hurts the state and the community when he hurts himself, and he should not be allowed to do it. I think whenever a man gets drunk, he should be put in jail at hard labor for a certain number of days. And every time the offense is repeated, he should get a heavier sentence. Then the drunkenness itself would come to be considered disgraceful from its punishment. Now a man is arrested for being 'drunk and disorderly,' and locked up or fined. It is not the drunkenness, but the disorder that is punished. The drunkenness should be the misdemeanor, and it should be corrected out of existence."

"That's so; yes, yes, that's so," said Uncle Barum, who wanted to agree with Achilles. "You look out for your mother, and don't let her go to the penitentiary to see him."

That night Uncle Barum sat long by his fire meditating what he should do next.

CHAPTER XV.

UNCLE BARUM'S BEQUEST.

UNCLE BARUM'S decision as to his future course toward Thomas Stanhope was hastened by Friend Amos Lowell.

"Thee knows, Friend Barum, that Thomas Stanhope will be out of prison by Thanksgiving Day?"

"No, I don't know any such thing. What put that into your head? His time won't be out for two good years."

"But thee knows that good behavior shortens sentence, Friend Barum, and Thomas has been an exemplary prisoner. As I reckon the months of remission earned by good conduct, Thomas will come home by Thanksgiving, and I only hope his good behavior will not end at the prison gate, but will follow with him when his home has received him. It would be a pity that such a comfortable and upright household should be again destroyed."

"It shall not be destroyed," said Uncle Barum to himself, and that night, when the family was in bed, Uncle Barum wrote to Thomas Stanhope, and sent his letter, not through the chaplain, but through the deputy-warden. He informed Thomas that he, as a near relative of the family, had been requested to write to him, saying that as his family were now happy and prosperous, they did not care to be disturbed by his homecoming. Mercy had taken the liberty allowed by the law, been divorced nearly a year before, remarried, and of course would not see Thomas again.

"As your children in so many years have forgotten all about you, it is not worth while for you to come back at all. I never thought well of you myself, and would rather not see you again. As Mercy's uncle, I am willing to help you to go farther away, and I send a check for forty dollars which some of the officers will cash for you, and you had better take it and go west.

"BARUM TITUS."

Thus the letter concluded, Now when a statement is so explicit, and clinched moreover with

forty dollars, one is apt to put faith in it. The deputy-warden, who was a new man, felt no particular interest in Thomas; he gave him his letter, told him the check should be cashed for him when he departed, and so locked it up in his strong-box. He added that he was in luck to have something to begin the world on.

The chaplain was absent for a few days, and if he had been there at hand, perhaps Thomas would not have revealed the terrible misfortune which had befallen him.

Mercy had cast him off! He deserved it; but then how much he had said to the chaplain about poor Mercy's faithful goodness! And the children would have no more of him! Well, it was just. True, Mercy's letters had led him to expect something very different, but Mercy's sudden marriage would alter all that.

The very clumsiness of this plot helped to further it; it must be true, it was so bold and rough a statement; people made lies smoother.

Barum Titus? Thomas knew all about him; a severe, reputable old man, who had been Mercy's guardian.

Thomas fell ill and was in bed for some days. Then he resumed his duties as nurse. For three

years he had been nurse in the hospital, the best nurse there. Always silent and sad, he was now a little more so, that was all.

And having sent the letter that laid an axe to the root of all Thomas Stanhope's comfort, was Uncle Barum any happier? There was no time left to tell how he would have felt left to sober contemplation of his little scheme. Uncle Barum and his sin went up to God for judgment very close together. On Thursday Uncle Barum's trembling fingers bound up that fatal letter in a mail packet; on Saturday night Uncle Barum felt ill; one of his attacks was coming on. Sometimes they began and then went away, but this one increased, and on Sunday he sent for the doctor. Samuel went to church, but Letitia remained with Uncle Barum. After church Mercy and Achilles came to see him; so did Sacy Terhune and her husband.

Uncle Barum was peevish, and did not wish to be disturbed. The attack was like all the rest: he would be better in the morning; he wanted them all to go away and let him alone. This was only what he had had twenty times before. Sacy's husband might stay and sleep on the couch in his room; the others must go home,

and Samuel and Letitia must go to bed and leave him in peace.

The doctor said about the same thing. "He will have a rough, uneasy night of it, and Mr. Terhune had better stay by him. In the morning he will probably be himself again."

Therefore Uncle Barum was left alone with Mr. Terhune, to get what rest he could. The doctor came in early while Letitia was getting breakfast.

"How is your uncle, Letitia?"

"Oh, I think he is doing nicely, doctor. He has had such a quiet night, slept all the time soundly. He is asleep now. I am making him a little beef-tea the first thing."

The doctor said only "Um-m-m-m," and went in Uncle Barum's room. He drew up the shade, looked at the patient, and shook his head, then took his flaccid hand. This sleep meant not life, but death. Uncle Barum awoke.

"Here is your beef-tea, uncle," said Letitia coming in.

Uncle Barum eagerly swallowed a few spoonfuls, then he turned his head. Suddenly he felt in himself the truth. The springs of life had given way. He felt himself slipping out of

touch of all that had hitherto surrounded him. He looked at the doctor.

"I'm going this time, all's over with me. Well, doctor, I am old enough to die."

The apathy of extreme disease, the torpor of that death which for several hours had claimed some of his organs as he slept, laid heavy hands upon him; he closed his eyes and adjusted his head upon his pillow.

The doctor looked at Mr. Terhune and Letitia confirmation of Uncle Barum's diagnosis.

Letitia stood confounded. Mr. Terhune stepped into the kitchen where Samuel was helping prepare breakfast, and bade him go quickly for Sacy and Madge; Uncle Barum was going to die. The shocked Samuel ran to Mrs. Terhune's with the story. Mrs. Terhune bade him go to the barn, saddle the horse, and ride fast to the Titus farm to call Philip. The obedient Samuel did as he was commanded.

Arrived at Uncle Barum's, Sacy Terhune met the family there in the hall. "O Cousin Titus, Cousin Titus!" she exclaimed, "what has happened?"

"Only that this trouble is taking him off now instead of some other time," said the doctor.

"We all knew how it would be sooner or later. Mrs. Terhune, you must be perfectly calm before you go in his room. He wants quiet, and he must not be disturbed. He will last a few hours. Are all his family sent for?"

"Where is Samuel?" said Letitia, "he must go for mother and Achilles. I want them here quickly!"

"I sent Samuel for Philip," said Mrs. Terhune.

"He cannot be back then for nearly three hours, and mother must be sent for," said Letitia.

"It will do well enough when Samuel comes back," said Cousin Sacy, who was quick-witted and had laid her own plans. She did not want Mercy there just yet.

"Mr. Terhune, will you not ask Friend Amos to send for mother and Achilles?" said Letitia rather indignantly.

Perhaps these contentions reached Uncle Barum's ear, for as Sacy, Letitia, and Mr. Terhune, with Madge and the doctor returned to his bedside, Uncle Barum said, "Where is Mercy? I want Mercy. Terhune, have Mercy fetched at once!"

"Certainly," said Mr. Terhune, and went out for a messenger.

Sacy was rather effusive as she bent tearfully over the old man.

"Don't fuss," he said fretfully, "sit down in that rocking-chair. 'Tishia, fan me."

"I'll fan you, dear Cousin Titus!" cried Mrs. Terhune.

"Let 'Tishia, you are too fussy. She's quiet." Letitia took the fan.

Madge Terhune, moving quietly about, set the room in order. Then she neatly smoothed Uncle Barum's pillows. She was a neat girl, of good taste, and it annoyed her to see laid over the foot of the dying man's bed his old bottle-green coat. She took it up to put it out of sight.

"Let that be! I want it over my feet!" said Uncle Barum querulously. "Don't touch it!"

"I'll lay an afghan in its place, Cousin Titus," said Madge, "that will be warmer and lighter."

"Let my coat be! I know you hate it. I like it. You like it too, don't you, 'Tishia?"

"Why, yes, uncle," said Letitia, who had no interest in the old coat one way or the other. "I like it if you do—and—you have worn it ever since I knew you; it makes me think of you."

Her eyes filled with tears; how often had she

seen the shabby bottle-green great-coat about the queer, kind old man's form.

"You shall have it, Letitia," said Uncle Barum. "You will take care of it—for my sake. It shall be yours, to remember me by. You don't want it, do you, Sacy?"

"O Cousin Titus! I only want what you want me to have."

"All right. I know what you want. It is in the will. I have kept my promise to you. The bonds are for you—the Titus farm goes to Philip. There are a few little things for the rest. Nothing for Madge—and Letitia—Letitia has—the coat. I give it to you, girl. Let it cover me till I am gone, and then take it away—and take care of it."

Letitia nodded, cried, but very softly, and fanned Uncle Titus.

Madge went and stood by the window. Sacy Terhune had her handkerchief to her eyes, but that word about the bonds had greatly assuaged her grief.

Uncle Barum dozed and woke, and dozed again. His mind was too feeble to fix itself on anything. Those little transactions with regard to Thomas Stanhope, the fruit of failing intellect

and moral sense, were already forgotten. The doctor went away. Mr. Terhune returned; after a while Mercy and Achilles came with Patience.


Madge Terhune made herself useful; she put the house in order, prepared coffee and food, answered the knocks and inquiries at the door, and was sensible and generally useful.

Uncle Barum took a little medicine and some drops of nourishment. Then he said he wanted to bid Patty and Samuel good-by, and have them sent home; he did not want so many about him.

"Good-by, Patience," he said. "Be a good girl. I didn't leave you anything, but you'll not forget the old man. Good-by, Samuel. I've left Samuel the furniture of this room, and also the gray mare. Sell the mare, Samuel, and put the money in bank till you go to college. Don't take after your father, Samuel, he missed it."

Then the two children went away. Philip came, and Uncle Barum asked to talk with him alone a little. At the end of this interview Achilles was called in by Philip.

"Achilles," said Uncle Barum, "you are a good boy and a good son. Take care of your mother. Promise me that you'll never touch a drop of



strong drink. Lay your hand on my heart and swear it; I don't want you to go your father's way."

"I swear it, and Philip is my witness," said Achilles.

"Achilles, I left Philip my farm, the old Titus farm. I promised it to him when your mother ran away."

"That is all right," said Achilles.

"Achilles, Philip is a good fellow. He'll be a man you can tie to. I have planned for him to marry Letitia. He'll do well by her. I want you to keep other fellows away from her and advise her to marry Philip. Carry it through if you can."

"I will. It is for Letitia's good," said Achilles.

"Philip, give Achilles my watch off the bureau. It is a good one, Achilles. Use it; you'll never drink or gamble it away. Put it on, it is yours. All else is in the will. The will is in Friend Amos Lowell's safe, and take notice you both, I gave Letitia my old coat to remember me by."

Then the others of the family were recalled and the watch by the dying man continued. The doctor came and went; the minister came, had

worship, commending this parting soul to God, and went away.

The cares of this earth, the little he was leaving, occupied Uncle Barum more than the world to which he was moving apace. Was this strange? The scripture tells us that as a tree falls to northward or to southward, there it lies. We project ourselves through eternity on those same lines which we travelled here below. For very few of the sons of earth there are who make a short turn in soul-direction at the grave's mouth. And as it shall be in that world beyond, so is it in the hour and article of death. "The ruling passion strong in death," is a much harped-on phrase; the master-thought of life is the master-thought of the dying hour. Uncle Barum had all his life been chiefly busied with his small earthly possessions, and the disposal thereof. He thought of it still, his mind half wandering in the feebleness of dissolution.

"Mercy, if you had not—run away—you'd have had all I have—you would have—owned the Titus farm."

"Never mind, uncle," whispered Mercy, "Philip will do better by the farm than I could. Uncle, you are not—afraid to die?"

"No—we all have to die—I'm just tired," said the old man. Then after a while—"Mercy, I wish you hadn't run away. I was so angry about it."

"But you've forgiven me, long ago, uncle."

"Yes, only forgiving is not forgetting, and I gave Sacy all the government bonds, Mercy—I promised 'em to her."

"Never mind, uncle, never mind. I need nothing. Try and fix your mind on God, on heaven."

"I don't just know what they'll be like," said Uncle Barum fretfully. "I've sometimes felt as if God was leading me, and would take me where my mother is—but, will any of them know me? I suppose they will—I suppose it is all right. The Lord will have a great deal to forgive in—all of us, Mercy."

Finally he looked at Letitia. "Letitia, you have been a very good girl to me, no one could be better. Achilles knows all about what I want, and you do as Achilles says, Letitia. And Sacy—you've got all you asked for—all that ever I promised you—and you let things go on as they ought to go on; don't you go to interfering—and making trouble."

Sacy saw the dying eyes rest on Philip; she knew what was meant, but she could not thwart this dying man.

"You'll let things go on, Sacy," he insisted.

"I'll not interfere," said Sacy.

"Sometimes people take strong measures when they interfere; I did. Mercy! I wrote——" but his feeble voice trailed off into sleep.

Once more he awoke. The afternoon was waning and life was almost gone. He spoke on the old theme.

"The will says Mercy is to have all the money in the desk, and the furniture here. You're not in luck, Mercy—there's only forty dollars in the desk. Letitia, come here; I want to speak to you."

Letitia took her mother's place by his pillow and bent down her head.

He whispered heavily, slowly: "Letitia, if you look—you'll find between the——" but there was no ending of that sentence. A fluttering breath and all was over. Letitia lifted her fair, rosy young face from that gray, cold face of death.

"He's gone," said Sacy Terhune starting forward. "Gone! Letitia, what did he say?"

"Nothing; he could not finish."

Sacy mechanically laid the sheet and counterpane straight. To do so she must take up the jealously guarded old coat. She handed it to Letitia. "Here! I don't know what to do with it. Hang it up."

Letitia stood with the coat over her arm. Mr. Terhune went after the undertaker to prepare the body for burial.

When the undertaker and his assistant came, Sacy, Letitia, and the rest of the family left the room.

"Letitia, what did Cousin Titus say, or try to say?" asked Sacy.

"Why, he said, 'Letitia, if you will look—you'll find between the——'"

"The what?" demanded Sacy eagerly.

"Nothing, that was all. He stopped just there. Poor man, he wanted something and could not tell it. But of course he did not want it longer—he was gone."

"Look between the what?" thought Sacy, "something about hidden money, I'll be bound. He was so queer! He's hidden a lot of money, I'll venture, and we'll never find it! I'll look;

he promised me all; if there is a hoard, I have a right to it."

She went into the sitting-room, and covering her face, she discussed with herself every possible place of concealment for money. She would search that house well.

Philip, his father, and Achilles, planned for the funeral.

Letitia went up to her little room, and with the old coat lying on her lap, began to cry. Poor Uncle Barum! he had been so kind to her, and what a nice, quiet home she had had with him!

Presently Mercy came up to Letitia's room, and casting herself on the little bed where she had slept in girlhood, she too wept for Uncle Barum, and reproached herself for the pain she had given him.

Letitia had no cause for self-reproach. She stroked and patted the faded, heavy, old coat as it lay on her lap, and she mourned heartily for her great-uncle.

That night, after Mercy and Achilles had gone home to the children, and Letitia was finally asleep, while Philip and a friend sat silent near the rigid form in the sitting-room, Sacy Terhune, little lamp in hand, looked between everything

she could think of; between the mattress and the feather-bed, between the leaves of the big Bible, between the desk and the wall, between the bureau drawers and the back of the bureau, between the bricks in the hearth; but nowhere could she find any secret hoard.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNCLE BARUM'S OLD COAT.

SACY TERHUNE left her house and her house-keeping to Madge, and remained at Uncle Barum's, not only until after the funeral, but until the cottage was finally dismantled, and the goods carried to Mercy's house on the mountain. Sacy spent night after night, and day after day, searching for that "between" where something was to be found. She closely questioned Letitia.

"He did not say a syllable more," said Letitia, "only—'you will find—if you look between——' and as he is gone, what difference does it make? He wants nothing now."

"But I want to fulfill his last wishes," said Sacy. "He had something on his mind—some gift for some one. It is my duty to find what he wanted found."

However it was a duty Sacy was not destined to accomplish. She searched and sought, took up the carpets with her own hands, took down

the bedsteads, examined the seams of the mattresses and pillows, to see if they had been ripped to afford a hiding-place for anything. Every box and bundle, every cushion and drawer, was investigated. Letitia's room was subjected to the same search when Letitia was away at her teaching. Perhaps Uncle Barum had concluded Letitia's room would be a good hiding-place for treasure. Nothing, however, was found.

Friend Amos Lowell invited Letitia and Samuel to stay with him until the schools in Ladbury closed for the summer.

Achilles brought a wagon, and carried the furniture left to his mother to their house. Uncle Barum had possessed nothing very fine, but the little that he had, added to what was already in the cottage, served to furnish it very nicely, even the new room that had been finished for Letitia upstairs. Mercy sold a few articles, and put the ten dollars that came from them in her trunk. She thought she had a right to save that for Thomas.

But the forty dollars that had been in Uncle Barum's desk, what of that? Forty dollars is a very small sum of money generally; but to a person who has never before had forty dollars at

one time, that amount looks large indeed. Mercy's forty dollars occasioned her much thought. Should she save that to help Thomas when he came from prison? Thomas had deserved very little of her; but Achilles had deserved much. For eight years of patient, persistent, unflinching toil, he had cared for her and for the children. Mercy had the element of justice fairly well developed in her gentle nature.

She handed the forty dollars to Achilles one evening. "My son, I know you want to buy some land. Here, make the first payment with this. It is yours; if it were ten times as much you would deserve it all for your goodness to me and your brother and sisters."

"Are you sure you want me to have it, mother? It is all you have."

"No; you children are all I have. This little money is yours. I am glad enough to be able to give you something for once."

"I sold Uncle Barum's horse and buggy and harness, and so on, to-day, for ninety dollars, for Samuel," said Achilles, "and I was going to have Friend Amos Lowell take it at interest until Samuel needs it; but Friend Amos said he thought I had better borrow it myself, and use

it in getting the land I want, and I can pay it and the interest on it when Samuel needs it."

"I think that will be a good plan," said Mercy, and she and Achilles sat talking for some time about the land to be purchased and the improvements to be made.

But there was another subject lying even nearer to Mercy's heart, about which she did not speak to Achilles; she knew it would only irritate him. This long silence that had fallen between her and Thomas distressed her. It was nearly a year now since she had heard from him, and she had written to him and to the chaplain. She felt that she must go and try to see Thomas. Perhaps he was sick. Could it be that he was dead? Surely they would have let her know. The trip would be expensive. That ten dollars which she had put in her trunk would not cover it. She must be gone a day and two nights; she would have to get some money from Letitia, eight dollars at least. She felt that Letitia would help her and sympathize with her.

She must wait until Letitia came home from Ladbury for the summer, then she could get the money from her, and leave the house and children in her charge. It seemed such a terrible under-

taking to go in the cars to a distant city. Mercy had not left the environs of Ladbury since the week that she was married. She shrank painfully from the undertaking; once or twice she thought perhaps she had better let Letitia or Samuel go. But no! poor children, they had been disgraced enough; they should not present themselves before the prison officials as a convict's children; their father should never be seen by them with shaven head and convict garb. This was her burden; she was the one who had taken Thomas Stanhope for better or worse; she must go, and go alone to seek him.

She thought of these things as she worked in the house, while through the open door and windows came the cheery song or whistle of Achilles from the fields that were now his own, and where he was already planting crops for the first time—buckwheat, and broom-corn. He planted crops for which the season was not too late. When her brooding over Thomas and that terrible visit became too torturing, Mercy went out to work among her flowers and vines in the garden, which in the eight years of the reign of Achilles had become as a bower of beauty.

When Thomas Stanhope set up over that cot-

tage and its surroundings the sign of the bottle and beer mug, all was a desolation; and passers-by said "What a forlorn, neglected place!" Now that Prince Achilles administered affairs, with the plough and spade for his royal emblems, all was bloom and beauty, and passers-by paused to look at the crowded blossoms, and inhale the fragrance of grape and honeysuckle. When along the mountain-side the laurels bloomed, piling their rosy masses among the green, the Stanhope cottage was no longer a foul blot on the fairness of nature, but as a gem fitly set, a human home in the beauty of the early summer world.

Meantime Letitia had gone back to the house of Friend Amos Lowell. With her went the little blue-painted box of clothing, the box hinged and painted and provided with a padlock by Achilles, when Letitia first left home. When Letitia prepared to leave the room which had been hers since she went to live with Uncle Barum, she took Uncle Barum's old coat down from the nail where she had hung it the night when he died, and, giving it a good brushing, folded it neatly to be placed in the bottom of her box.

"What are you going to do with that old dud?"

said Sacy, who had come up to ask Letitia for the hundredth time what Uncle Barum's last words could have meant.

"Keep it for Uncle Barum's sake. He gave it to me."

"I wonder why he wouldn't get himself a better coat. It did vex Madge so to see him go about in that heavy, faded, old-fashioned rig. Summer and winter he wanted to wear that ugly coat."

"He was old, and his blood was chilly. I think old people become accustomed to some particular garments, and do not like to change them for others, even nicer or more fashionable. They are not so comfortable in the new things. This coat reminds me of Uncle Barum; I can see just how he looked in it." And Letitia, laying the coat in the bottom of her chest, prudently sprinkled it with a little gum camphor.

"He always seemed so economical, and I can't tell where his money went," continued Mrs. Terhune. "Did you know there were only twenty-five hundred dollars in bonds? I thought there would be five or six thousand."

"Farmers don't get rich very fast," said Letitia, packing her few books, and proceeding to

fold her garments to lay in the box. "Uncle Barum was only a farmer."

"But he used to lend money, and he farmed many years and was very saving. Did he ever tell you how much he had?"

"No; but he spoke of getting interest, and it was not more than the interest on twenty-five hundred, at four per cent. I do not think that he spent more than that interest and the rent that Philip paid for the farm."

"He might just as well have given the boy that farm out and out, when he went on it, instead of asking rent!"

"Then what would Uncle Barum have lived on?" said Letitia.

"He never hurt himself making presents to you," said Sacy, as she regarded critically Letitia's few plain clothes.

"He gave me constant kindness, a comfortable home, a chance to go to school. He has given mother and the children a number of presents too. He used to tell me that when I was twenty-one, he meant to give me a watch and a black silk dress. I think he meant to be liberal, but he had less money than people supposed."

Letitia went to Friend Amos Lowell's, and there

the old coat lay in her chest; it was out of the way and safe from moths. Friend Sara saw it one day, as the chest stood open.

"Seems to me," said Friend Sara, "Uncle Barum might have given thee a better souvenir than that old coat. Will thee try to make it over into a coat for Samuel?"

"I think it is hardly good enough," said Letitia; "it is quite threadbare in many places, and I could earn, by sewing, a new coat for Samuel, in the time it would take to rip, turn, and cut over this great-coat. I don't suppose he meant it for a souvenir; he had a kind of affection for the coat from long use, and he did not want Mrs. Terhune and Madge to throw it in the rag-bag. He knew I would take care of it, for his sake."

"It is worth nothing but to braid into mats," said Friend Sara, "and thee would not feel like doing that. The old man was like a parent to thee."

"When I go home I shall hang it up in the closet in my room."

"Be sure then that thee hangs it in a cotton bag, tied tight, else the moths may get into it and spread through the house. The bequest

would serve thee but a poor turn, if it filled thy house with moths."

However, the coat served Letitia better than that. There was a sudden cold night when she woke up chilly, and realized that she had been premature in laying away Friend Sara's warm quilts. She was glad enough to get Uncle Barum's great-coat from the box, and spread it over her counterpane.

Then one Sunday evening Philip walked home with her from church, and came in to sit for a while, and a rain set in. Philip must go back to the farm, five miles off, and he had with him no overcoat; he wore only his new spring suit.

"I can lend you Uncle Barum's great-coat," said Letitia. "I'm sure he would have been glad to know it could be of use to you. It will keep you perfectly dry. Be sure and let me have it back safe."

"Oh, I'll bring it myself," said Philip.

"Where did you get that hideous old coat? I thought I had seen the last of it," said Madge to her brother, as on Thursday evening he stopped at his mother's home, the old coat on his arm.

"Letitia lent it to me when it was raining, Sunday night."

"Great loan that; I would not have the old thing on."

"It may have saved me pneumonia, and I know it saved my spring suit," laughed Philip.

"I suppose you're going to take it back," said his mother. "Are you never going to stop visiting Letitia Stanhope?"


"Yes," replied Philip fervently, "when I can get Letitia to come and live at the Titus farm."

"There are plenty of as nice girls, with more money."

"None as nice to my mind as Letitia, and as for money, a girl like Letitia is a fortune in herself."

"Well, it hurts me to think of my son having a convict for a father-in-law," said Sacy.

"It is a little rough on us, mamsey; on Letitia, most of all, but now it is done it can't be helped. After all we are not to blame for our parents, or responsible for them, but for our children. You could not be praised or blamed on your father's account, mamsey; but if you had brought me up to be a scamp, then I should be a disgrace to you. Let us forget how bad Thomas Stanhope was, and only think how nice Letitia is."



"I only hope you won't regret your choice," said Sacy, sighing.

"Oh," said Philip with fervor, "if I can get my choice, I shall be the happiest fellow in the world!" He went off with the old coat on his arm. Madge felt indignant.

"See him carrying that horrid old coat as composedly as if it was a brand new fur-trimmed beaver! And if Letitia would go out and take a walk with him, which she won't, he would be as proud of her as if she were a princess."

"Why not?" said her father, "I doubt if there is any princess who is a better, sweeter girl in her own right than Letitia."

"Well, I suppose we must have the privilege of seeing Phil go over to Friend Amos Lowell's to visit her, all next year," said Madge, much aggrieved.

"No, you will not; he will do his visiting up on the mountain. I hear the teacher on the mountain has resigned her school; she has had it ten years. She is going to be married. Letitia told me this noon that she had applied for that school, so that she could be with her mother. Besides she thought that if Samuel stayed here at Friend Amos Lowell's, that would be enough.

I saw one of the school committee this evening, and he said they were glad, indeed, to get Letitia up there."

"She'll have a dull time of it," said Madge, "teaching that mountain school for thirty dollars a month, and living way up there out of reach of any society or amusement."

The fate thus sketched by Madge, did not look doleful to Letitia—joyful, rather. How happy she would be living with her mother once more, and cheering her and comforting her! It made her glad to think how Mercy's face always lit up when turned toward her. And there was Achilles, the faithful brother, the hard worker, who never thought of going out in the evening; how glad he would be to have Letitia to talk to, and discuss with him the affairs of the farm and the news in the paper.

When Letitia returned home Mercy explained to her that plan of going to the penitentiary, to see what had become of her husband.

"Poor little mother, it will be a terrible undertaking for you," said Letitia; but as she saw her mother could not be easy in this uncertainty, she agreed to provide the needed money, and to talk over the project with Achilles. "Achilles need

not know that you have gone there, unless you choose," said Letitia.

"I had rather have him know. Achilles deserves frank and fair treatment; there never was a better son, and he might as well know now, as any time, that I cannot give your father up and turn my back on him, when all the world forsakes him. I shall try to help and comfort him."

Letitia did not reply; she wondered if it were possible that her father could ever show himself worthy of such faithful devotion.

Mercy's visit to the penitentiary was, however, indefinitely put off. Patience began to be sick a few days after the home-coming of Letitia and Samuel. She became very ill and the doctor pronounced the disease scarlet fever. Mercy could not leave the child, and was not willing that Letitia should incur the risk run in nursing her. "It is not God's will that I should go to look after your father at present," she said. "My first duty is here among you children. I must take care of Patience myself, and after she gets well, I should not dare to go away for some weeks, lest some of the rest of you should come down with the same disease. No, I must let all

that plan go; the Lord will lead the way; all we have to do is to follow."

The Stanhope family were in a fashion of quarantine; they did not need the help of their neighbors, and every one feared the fever. Philip Terhune came regularly to visit them, but Mercy and Letitia would not allow him to enter the gate. He sat on the horse block planted for Friend Amos, and Letitia sat in a swing that had been put up for Patty, and thus for half an hour or so they chatted, and then Philip rode away.

One night Patience was very ill; certain new symptoms had appeared, and it was decided that Achilles should go down to Ladbury, to speak with the doctor, and bring up whatever medicine was ordered. A heavy thunder-storm was raging. Letitia wrote out the message to the doctor, lest Achilles might forget something.

"You need your overcoat, Achilles, let me get it," she said.

"I have none. I had outgrown mine so that I could not button it, and as it was pretty good, I sold it to Tim Jedd this spring."

"I'll get Uncle Barum's old coat for you; that will keep you dry as a nut," said Letitia, going for it.

Before Achilles had been gone long, the storm ceased, and the summer night became exceedingly hot and close. When Achilles returned, as his sister met him, he said:

“I have two things to tell you that you will be sorry to hear. I have lost Uncle Barum’s old coat, and—father has been pardoned out from prison.”

CHAPTER XVII.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS.

It was after midnight when Achilles came home with the medicine for Patty, and the news that he had lost the old coat, and that his father was out of prison.

Letitia forgot the coat in the greater news. She had gone to the door to meet Achilles, and they stood without, he holding his horse by the bridle.

"How long has he been out?" asked Letitia.

"Over a week. Parkins in the drug store told me, and asked if he was up here?"

"It is strange that he has not come here yet," said Letitia.

"I just know he is drinking somewhere," groaned Achilles. "And when he has used up whatever he has, he'll come here to turn the home into a den, as he used to! But my mind is made up. Through that gate and over this door-sill he shall not pass! He had his chance,

and chose to destroy and disgrace us all. I've had mine and I've chosen to build things up, and take care of you all. The family and the home are mine now, not his; and I'll defend them."

"I shall expect him every minute," said Letitia; "every step I hear, every man I see coming up the road, I will think is father coming home."

"Don't you be afraid or worry," said Achilles. "I'm a man now, twenty-one past, and I'll protect you all."

"What will mother say, I wonder?"

"We won't tell her just yet," said Achilles. "She has enough to worry her with Patty sick, and hearing this would stir her up and take away what little chance of sleep she has. We will keep it quiet until Patty gets well. Perhaps father will never come back."

.
And so the long sentence was completed; the prisoner was free, the July sun shone for Thomas Stanhope; the fields and the highways were open before him; he had a name and not a number; he no more wore the hideous stripes.

How had it all happened? What had been his fortunes since he became a trusty, in charge of a

corridor, and was one of the prison schoolmasters?

His life had passed on with very little change, day like day, and week the counterpart of the week that preceded it. As the end of the time of his imprisonment came in sight, he began to plan more and more what he should do when he was free, and he resolved to open these matters to Mercy in his next letter. And then, thanks to Uncle Barum's little scheme, silence fell between the prisoner and his home.

As week after week passed, and no news came, Thomas began to be very uneasy. He wrote, and wrote again, he persuaded the chaplain to write for him; but all three letters left the post-office in the pocket of Uncle Barum's old coat, and still no news came to the prisoner. Thomas began to assure himself that his family, taking the alarm as his term of imprisonment drew near its close, had preferred to stop all communication with him.

He had made up his mind to write to Friend Amos Lowell, asking him to be his intercessor with the family, assuring them of his deep penitence, and begging them to give him another trial, and allow him to redeem somewhat the

past, when that letter written by Uncle Barum arrived, telling him that Mercy had obtained a divorce, re-married, and that all the family preferred that he should not return to Ladbury. There was a check for forty dollars in the letter, payable to the warden of the prison.

If his friend the chaplain had been there to read this letter and advise him, perhaps Thomas Stanhope would not have been so sorely crushed by it, and might still have written to Friend Amos for further news. But the chaplain had just gone away for a month, ill, and Thomas had no one to whom to speak of his great sorrow. The deputy read the letter and sent for Thomas. The deputy was not a very sympathetic man, he had passed more than his quarter of a century among felons, but he regarded Thomas as a "good prisoner," who had made himself generally useful, and had never given any trouble. He was roused to some pity by the anguish on Thomas' face as he read the letter. He essayed to console him.

"Come, Stanhope, keep a stiff upper lip; this is rather rough on you, but such things will happen. It is part of the penalty of getting into the stripes. Women get divorced even from square

men often, and your wife has done pretty well to wait seven years. Women find it hard to earn their bread sometimes. You are not so bad off, man; here are forty dollars that I'll keep on the books for you, and you have laid up about twenty. Next Thanksgiving you will get out, on account of good conduct, no doubt, and sixty dollars and a new suit will set you up in the world. You are not an old man, and you're strong. If I were you I would go to Texas and hire on a cattle ranch; this little matter of the stripes won't follow you there."

The deputy felt that he had been exceedingly friendly to Thomas in this disquisition, and giving him his letter, dismissed him again to his duty. Thomas went, in an agony of mind; his future was robbed of hope; he had now suffered the sharpest punishment of his crime; he cared nothing for having his sentence ended; the outside world had no attractions, now that Mercy and the children had forgotten him. He had no thought of replying to this letter, and brooding over it alone he became unable to even speak of it. When the chaplain returned it was too late to be taken into Stanhope's confidence. Thomas could not now go to the chaplain and

unfold his new sorrow; the chaplain, having sixteen hundred troubled and troublesome souls in his care, could give only general attention to those who were not sick, or who did not personally seek him out.

Thus some weeks passed on, and Thomas in increasing gloom bore his new burden. Uncle Barum died and was buried, and Mercy laid her plans for going to see Thomas. Then the dullness of life in the penitentiary was broken in upon by an event.

One of the prisoners, a desperado sentenced for manslaughter, became greatly incensed at the deputy, and determined to have revenge. The man worked as a cutter-out in the clothing shop, and the knives used by the cutters are long, slim, and amazingly sharp. The man made a practice of concealing one of these knives in his sleeve when he left the work-room, watching his opportunity of meeting the deputy.

The opportunity came as the prisoners were marched out from dinner; the deputy happened to be standing in the shadow of a building opposite the door of the dining-room. Out of the file leaped the convict, with murder in his heart, and with upraised knife flung himself on the unarmed

deputy. Thomas Stanhope was the man who walked next behind the would-be murderer, his hand upon his shoulder. He leaped instantaneously after him, and throwing his arms about him, destroyed the force of the descending blow. The man made a second thrust, but Stanhope's hand closed over the knife; as the assassin drew the weapon back, Stanhope was severely cut. By this time, scarcely a minute having passed, the deputy had recovered from his surprise, and one of the guards had drawn a pistol. Finding himself likely to be overpowered, the prisoner who made the attack tried to fly, but as he dashed down the prison yard, the excited guard shot him. The file of prisoners was disordered into an excited throng, which the guards were trying to reduce to quiet. On his face, on the stone pavement, dead, lay the man-slayer. One of the guards tore a handkerchief and tied it tightly about Stanhope's wrist, trying to stop the flow of blood leaping in great jets from his wound. The deputy took a long pencil from his pocket, and made a fashion of tourniquet to stop the bleeding, and Thomas was taken to the hospital.

In a fortnight the wound was entirely healed,

and as Thomas was expecting to return to his hall, the deputy-warden sent for him.

"Stanhope," he said, "I am glad you are quite well, and the surgeon tells me your hand will not be permanently injured. Your sentence would have expired next November, but in consideration of your bravery the other day, the governor has sent you a full pardon. You are free. You will find a freedom suit all ready for you. You can go at once. I wish you good luck. Be sure and don't drink any more; it was drink brought you here, and it might bring you back, as it has hundreds of others. You are a square man now, keep square. I see you are all right when you are sober. You have laid up twenty dollars, and you had a check for forty; I will add twenty more, as my personal gift; you saved me an ugly cut the other day; how will you have the money, bills or coin?"

"Coin," said Thomas, hardly knowing what he said. Free! Able to go out! No longer a convict, free! but where should he go? Who cared for him now? He took the money, went to the cell where his new citizen's clothes had been placed, made his few preparations for departure; they were simple enough; he brought nothing

into the prison, he took nothing from it. He asked for a piece of canvas, and made a money belt; in this he put seventy-five dollars, and five he put in his pocket. He thought of going to see the chaplain, but at the gate he met him with a party of friends, coming to examine the penitentiary. There was no time for conversation; the chaplain shook his hand, wished him well, gave him a Bible from his own pocket, and bade him "go right home." Go home! O mockery! Home! He had no home, no wife, no family.

The prison gate swung to behind him with a loud clang. He was free to choose his own way. It seemed as if he were lost; lonely, dazed in this wide world, he who had been shut within four walls for eight long years. It seemed, too, as if every one who saw him knew him for an ex-convict, in spite of that good new suit of citizen's clothes and the straw hat. He felt alarmed and nervous in the throng upon the streets. Then great nature seemed to call him; he remembered fields, streams, woods, hills, flowers, birds, silence, freedom, the broad blue horizon on every hand. Evidently no city could stretch on and on forever. Whichever way he went, whether north, south,

east, or west, he would come at last to the city limits and reach the free country. And so, with no aim but this, he went his way straight on toward the north. He had been imprisoned so long that weariness came to him soon in walking; his limbs shook; there seemed to be too much air in the world; his lungs felt drowned in it; he was overpowered, oppressed with that very freedom which he had once desired.

Well, on and on, and finally the houses were less closely placed; the sidewalks narrowed, and were lost; grass grew by the waysides; there were wide, vacant spaces, where cows and goats fed; chicory and daisies bloomed by the pathway. How long it was since he had gathered a flower! Then there were broad fields and country roads; and wild blackberry-vines with berries upon them; and horses and kine were pasturing in meadow-lands. The farm-houses were far apart, the sun was setting; he was so weary that he could scarcely drag one aching foot after the other; he was faint for food, he had eaten nothing since breakfast. By the roadside he finally found a little house where he asked for supper and a night's lodging.

"There's only one room," said the man, evi-

dently a carter, "and my hand has that, and he is sick."

"Can't I sleep in the barn?" said Thomas, too exhausted to go farther, and referring to a little tumble-down stable.

"Well, no; the mules and cart are all I have, and I can't afford to keep them insured. I never let any one sleep there, for fear of fire."

"I won't smoke, if that's what you fear," said Stanhope.

"I wouldn't trust any one; the risk is too big."

"There's two single beds in the lad's room," spoke up the woman who was cooking supper, "and as for sick, he's only got a bad cold. He's had it for four or five days." She needed the money, and preferred to have the proposed lodger stay.

"Take the vacant bed, if you want it," said the man; "fifty cents for supper, bed, and breakfast. It's cheap enough."

Thomas, too weary to do more than crawl, entered and sat down. The coffee and bacon and corn-bread refreshed him.

"You seem pretty well done up," said his host, "for coming only from town; 'tain't over nine miles."

"I've been sick for two weeks in the hospital, cut in my hand."

"Oh, that accounts for your tirin' so quick. Where are you going?"

"Wherever I can find work."

"Losh! ain't there work in the city?"

"I'm tired of the city. I was raised in the country, and when a man has been sick, he longs for country quiet and air."

"Well, that's so," admitted the carter, and began to talk about the roads and distances until Thomas presently recovered his ideas of direction and locality, and knew where he was. Going up to the attic he slept, but, waking by times, heard the sick lad moaning or talking in his sleep. He took him a drink twice, and shook up his pillow and smoothed his bed-clothes. In the morning he asked him how he was.

"Oh, I feel pretty bad. I'm all broke out with something; reckon I've got the chicken-pox. Ever had it?"

"I guess so," said Thomas, paying little attention. All night he had dreamed of home. He must once more see Ladbury; the home where his father had lived; the grave-yard where his parents and his children slept. He must look

once more on the cottage on the mountain, where he might have been so happy, so honorable, so content. He would disturb no one; he would not make himself known; he would only look from afar on the paradise of home. And so this new Enoch Arden started on his way.

He had no desire to make speed; the quiet and beauty of the summer world comforted him, and seemed to remove from body and soul the stain and shadow of the prison. He wandered on, catching a ride now and then, getting meals and lodgings as he could; a well-dressed, quiet-looking, well-spoken man, whom no one feared or suspected; and so, one Friday, he was climbing the mountain wher ehad once been his home. He moved but slowly that day; he was feverish and stopped to drink wherever there was water; he felt so tired, so weak; his bones ached; his head throbbed and ached; he was not hungry, but faint. He thought it strange that after his out-of-doors life and plain food, and no drink but water, for the past ten days he should feel so wretchedly ill.

He passed the Titus farm, where Mercy had lived when he had known her as a girl. O Mercy, gentle, patient, kind one, how hard had been your lot, until even your heart had failed!

Blame Mercy for finally casting him off? Not he. How false he had been to every promise! He deserved to be cast off.

There was no sign of Uncle Barum about the old place; strangers were there. He asked a lad where was Barum Titus.

“Dead, oh, a good many weeks ago!”

On then, and finally across a shoulder of the mountain, there was the tall dead pine-tree called the “Eagle Tree,” and there the guide-board that he knew, and yonder was the Canfield place, and there the Gardiner’s farm; he knew them. They had improved a little in eight years, but where was his home—where the paintless, porchless, fenceless, unkempt, broken-windowed home of Thomas Stanhope, drunkard? It had stood there, right there, the guide-board pointing to it like an index finger. But what house was this that stood there now? Here was a green door-yard with trees and two large round flower-beds brilliant with bloom; a paling-fence neatly kept; even those adjuncts of a hitching-post and a horse-block. Here was a cream-colored house with a porch draped in grape-vines, and with two bright red benches and a rocking-chair invitingly placed upon it. There was a swing, hung upon

a frame over a little board platform, speaking of attention to some child's pleasure. This house had a bay window; it had two dormer windows on the newly painted roof; it was evidently a house kept in scrupulous order. No one appeared in sight; but door and windows were open, and on a line in the grassy back-yard hung a washing. Thomas observed that the clothes were whole and white, and there were pillow-cases and red-bordered towels. Yonder was a neatly fenced barn-yard; a rebuilt barn painted red; a lusty crowing and cackling of fowls was heard; from the pen came now and then a squeal of pigs; in the hill-pasture two cows fed; and yonder, on the upland, worked a tall strong man, his red shirt and wide hat coming out strongly against the wooded background, and every motion betraying vigor and energy. A little lad worked with this man; could this be Mercy's new husband?

Certainly, Mercy must have married a man with some money, and plenty of good-will, or this change could not have been wrought in her broken-down home! Poor Mercy, what a life he had led her in that house! Was it not well that she had found kindness and plenty at last?


Keeping along the field back of the road, and as much out of sight as possible, Thomas went his way, his head bent, his limbs shaking, scarcely able to crawl, until he came to a log house, long unused except as a winter shelter for sheep. He drank heartily at a spring near, ate a biscuit which he had in his pocket, and climbing into the upper part of the place, lay down on some clean straw. He was devoured by mental and physical anguish. Loss, remorse, despair contended with great bodily misery and pain.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW A PRODIGAL CAME HOME.

ALL day Saturday Thomas Stanhope lay in the upper room of the deserted log house. The windows had long since been taken out; the light came through chinks in the rough stone chimney; no sounds were heard but the chirr and whirr of grasshoppers and crickets, the distant tinkle of a sheep-bell, or the wind sighing through a grove of pines near at hand. Twice in his feverish uneasiness Thomas went out to the spring for a drink, and ate freely of the blackberries that hung in great clusters from the unvisited vines. He had a biscuit or two in his pockets, but he suffered no hunger, only feverish thirst. At sunset he felt as if he must crawl out once more to the spot among the sumac bushes where he could see his former home. Perhaps he could get a distant view of those dear faces, the right to whose love-light he had forfeited. He dragged himself along to his post of observation in the field opposite the



cottage. As before, all was singularly still, the house open, but no one visible.

Presently a horseman appeared coming up the road, and at once a tall young girl came from the house and waved a kerchief. She must have been watching for the horseman. He dismounted, allowed his horse to graze—bridle on neck—at the roadside, while he himself sat down on the mounting-block. The girl put her kerchief in the pocket of her white apron, and came to the swing in which she seated herself. Her gown was of light blue, her hair, fair and shining, was piled high on her head, and gleamed like gold in the departing sunlight. Once the young man who talked with her removed his hat and bowed toward the house, as if to some one within; once he waved his hand in sign of good fellowship in the same direction. After twenty minutes of conversation, during which the youthful pair maintained between them the same distance, the young man remounted his horse and rode toward Ladbury; the girl watched him out of sight from the porch, and then went into the house.

Who was this girl? was it his little Letitia grown so tall and fair and gracious? Why did she receive this young man so oddly, out of

doors? Was the new stepfather like Uncle Titus of old, who would not allow suitors within the house? But no; the meeting had been open and easy, and from those signs of amity made toward the house, the young man seemed on good terms with all there.

Presently Thomas could see a man enter the front room of the house, coming from the rear with a lamp in his hand; he placed the lamp on the table in the bow-window, and sat down to read a paper. He was in his shirt-sleeves, large, strongly made, beardless; it seemed to Thomas that he had the bearing of a young man, but at that distance he could not tell. The curtains of the bow-window were up, and after a little Thomas saw a slender woman in a dark dress come into the room. It was Mercy! He remembered her figure and gait, and her way of carrying her head so well! She went up to the reader, laid her hand caressingly on his head, and then drew it down about his neck.

The man arose, placed Mercy in a rocking-chair, turned away from the light, put a stool at her feet, and then evidently proceeded to read the paper to her. When had Thomas ever shown this thoughtful care for Mercy? When had he

seated her in comfort and read a paper to her? His whole course toward Mercy, as he looked back on it, seemed to have been one of selfishness and neglect. Did he not deserve to see his once home made an Eden by some other man, and he himself shut out? Yes, he did. He would go away and never look on this sight again. He felt so terribly ill that it seemed as if he should die there so near to his lost home, unless he could creep away very promptly. If he could only get back to the cabin he would lie there quietly and die. They would find his body some time, and the money in his belt would bury him. No one would recognize him. There was nothing on him by which to identify him. That Bible the chaplain had given him had on the fly-leaf the name Adam Clarke; they would think he was Adam Clarke. Finally, in pain and despair, he had reached his loft, and lain down there, only longing to die.

It was now over a week since Achilles had brought home that news about the lost coat, and about his father. Patience was out of danger, but very weak and frail, and Mercy was greatly exhausted by nursing her so constantly. Absolute silence was kept at the cottage, as Patience

slept much of the time. On this Saturday evening, Achilles decreed that his mother should go to bed up in Letitia's room, and not rise until Monday morning.

"Thirty-six hours' rest will set you up again," he said. "Letitia can take care of Patty to-night, and to-morrow Tish must lie down and rest all day, and I will be nurse and housekeeper. We will have no meal cooked but breakfast, and the house shall be as still as a church all day, so that you can all rest."

This was now the third Sunday that Samuel had been debarred from going to church or Sunday school; consequently he had no library book to read, and, condemned to entire quiet, Sunday was likely to be a dull day to him. The chief delight of Samuel was speaking or reciting; he delighted in delivering orations, which he called "sermons;" he liked reciting hymns in the most impressive manner, and as he had a very retentive memory he knew hymns by the dozen, and passages of Scripture ditto.

"Achilles," he said, as he brought in the milk on Sabbath morning, "I've got my chores done, and I'll tell you what I mean to do. I'm going to put me up a picnic, and go to the old log

cabin, and spend the day. I like to be out there alone, and I can shout and preach, and sing and recite, all I want to. Here you'll make me creep around in stocking-feet, and not speak above my breath, for fear of waking up mother, or Patty, or 'Tishia."

"All right," said Achilles, "only see that you don't have any other boys there with you."

"Hoh! If any came there, and saw me, they'd run like mad, they are all so afraid of catching fever."

"There's a book for you, Friend Amos sent by Philip last night."

"'The Life of Livingstone,' it's a present," said Letitia.

Samuel gave a whoop of joy. "Now I will have a good time!"

"Confound your uproar!" said Achilles; "get out as fast as you can, before you have mother and Patty roused up."

Samuel took a pail of milk, some bread, butter, eggs, and fruit, his books, and a hammock of his own construction, and went off to the log cabin.

Thomas, after a night of fever and painful dreams, had fallen into a state of half sleep, half coma, and lay quiet on the straw.

Samuel swung up his sacking hammock in the lower room, prepared bark and chips ready for a fire on the hearth, whenever it should seem proper to light it, and boil the eggs or toast the bread which he had brought. He hesitated whether to play church, and have Bible reading and singing first, or read first in his new book. The charms of the book prevailed; he concluded it was too early for church, so established himself in his hammock.

He had read for some little time, when a deep groan startled him, then another. Whence did these sounds come? He laid by his book to listen. Then a human voice: "Mercy! Mercy! Oh, my wife! oh, my lost children! Lord God, this is the just punishment of my sins." Then silence; then: "Lost, all lost. I shall die alone, unhelped—it is just. I reap as I sowed. O Lord, forgive my many transgressions! pardon me for the sake of Christ." Then broken words as of Scripture: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. . . . Come unto me all ye that labor. . . . Thy sins as scarlet—shall be as snow."

This voice was from the room above, and evidently some one was there in deep distress.

There was nothing cowardly about Samuel. He climbed the little rough ladder leading through a hole in the floor, and when his head and shoulders were above the floor-level, he saw a man lying on the heap of straw; his shoes and coat were laid upon a projecting beam; he tossed and threw his arms about, and did not seem to notice Samuel. The boy went to him, knelt by him, touched him, crying:

“Man! man! wake up! What can I do for you?”

The half-conscious man moaned, “Water.”

Samuel hastened down, took a bowl from his basket, filled it at the spring, and brought it to the sufferer. The long, cool draught revived him; he asked:

“How did you come here, boy?”

“I came here to have a nice time by myself and play church. What is the matter with you?”

“I am sick. I think I have taken a very heavy cold; I ache so. Oh, I am in such pain it seems as if I must die.”

“So was my sister when she was sick of the fever. I know what I ought to do for you. You need some hot water to bathe your head and

neck and arms, and soak your feet; and you need a good bowl of hot mint tea. There is plenty of mint here by the spring, and I have sugar in my basket. Keep still and I'll fix you up all right."

Feeling very important, Samuel went down the ladder, lit his fire, and filled a big iron pot with water. The pot was one which Achilles had left in the cabin, as sometimes in the spring he needed hot water for sick sheep or lambs. Leaving the water to heat, Samuel went for mint, and taking the quart cup he had brought in which to boil his eggs, he made a bowl of strong mint tea well sweetened. Then he carried up the hot water for his patient to bathe, and while he was doing that Samuel made him a slice of toast and carried him that with the mint tea.

"You ought to have a better bed, and take off your clothes," said Samuel; "I know where I can get things for you. You keep still awhile." He set off on a run toward the barn. Uncle Barum had directed that a chest of his clothes, and the few things in the little hall room, where Samuel had slept in his house, should be given to the boy. As the Stanhope cottage was so small, and now so full, and the things were of little

value, they had been put in a blue chest in the barn loft, which was clean and dry and kept by two good mousers free of rats. Samuel thought first of going to consult Achilles, but that would take time; it might disturb the sleepers at the quiet house; the things were his own.

He took from the chest the empty tick that had been his straw bed, a little pillow, a blanket, a thin quilt, two towels and two night-shirts of Uncle Barum's; then pocketing a small piece of soap that lay on a beam in the barn, he set off toward the cabin, lugging his burden along on his back. Arrived at the cabin, he bade his patient undress and put on a night-shirt, and meanwhile he hastily put the straw in the tick, spread the quilt over it, and laid the pillow in place; then he helped the sick man, who could hardly stand, to reurn to the bed, and spread the light blanket over him.

The man gave a deep sigh of relief: "Oh, what a good bed!" closed his eyes, and seemed to sink into sleep.

Samuel went for a quantity of pine and hemlock branches to put into the empty window-frame and screen the light from the sufferer; brought up a little empty box from below, cov-

ered it with a paper from his lunch basket, and put it for a table by the bed's head.

Taking the sick man's coat to lay as additional covering over his feet, he found the Bible in the pocket and laid it with the scrap of soap on the table. Then he went below for a square bottle among the rubbish lying there, and filled it with a bouquet of daisies and red clover. When this was placed on the improvised table, Samuel told himself that he had made a "real beautiful room for the man."

Common sense warned him that he would do well to stay below, although the soft summer breeze of the mountain blew freshly through the open upper room. Swinging in his hammock reading, his thoughts were with the suffering stranger, and he heard his fevered mutterings about "deputies," "square men," "corridors," "taps," "dispensary," "hospitals," "evening class," "numbers," "guards," and so on, without understanding what they meant. Several times he went up to give the patient drink, and finally about six o'clock he carried him a large bowl of tea, and then left him for the night.

Returning home, he milked, fed the fowls, filled the wood-box in the kitchen, and laid the fire

ready to light in the morning. His mother was still in bed; Letitia had also been sent to bed by the masterful Achilles.

"I'm going to sleep on the floor by Patty's bed and take care of her to-night," said Achilles to Samuel. "You go up to bed when you get ready, only go barefooted, and make no noise."

He went into the lower bed-room and closed the door. The moon had risen. Samuel thought about going to bed; then he thought of the poor sick man, who might need help; why not run across to the cabin, and sleep in the hammock? He was strangely drawn to his poor sufferer. Gently shutting the house door he sped away to the cabin.

The night passed quietly enough. Samuel slept too soundly to hear the moaning or talking of his patient. At the first dawn the boy awoke, lit a fire, made a bowl of tea, and carried it to the loft. The man drank it eagerly.

"How do you feel?" said Samuel. "Seems to me you look very queer and lumpy."

"I feel so," said the man. "I wish I had a looking-glass."

"Perhaps it's measles," suggested Samuel, "or chicken-pox."

The man started, then cried, "Pull away those branches, boy—give me all the light you can."

Samuel obeyed. The man bared his arms and looked at them an instant. "Run, boy! run and leave me! This is small-pox! I must have taken it where I slept that first night! Don't stand there! Go."

"What will you do?" asked Samuel coolly.

"Never mind me—go."

"But if I'm going to catch it, why, I have; and where shall I go? I don't want to take it to my folks at home. I don't believe I'll get it. I'm vaccinated; oh, you should see the mark, big as a dime! I don't take things. Patty has had scarlet fever, and I never took that."

"Boy, what is your name?"

"Samuel Stanhope."

The man fell back on the bed, groaning in anguish.

"I'm sorry you feel so bad," said Samuel, "don't you know what to do for small-pox?"

The wretched sufferer roused himself. "Yes, I do. I have been a hospital nurse for years. You are right, boy. Your risk is run; you can now carry infection if you go near your people. I can tell you what to do for me, and if you take

the disease I shall be well enough, by then, to nurse you properly. Besides, there is as much or more chance that you do not take it, than that you do. In my pocket there is money for what we need. Can you get some corn meal for gruel, some sugar, and plenty of cream of tartar? The best English doctors use only free drinking of cream of tartar in small-pox, and rub with oil. We need a bottle of oil, and I wish we had some carbolic acid—and some tar.”

“There’s tar at the barn, and mother has the acid; she got it to keep round, since Patty was sick. I’ll go home and get what we need,” said Samuel; “I don’t want any money.”

“Don’t—go near your mother!” cried poor Thomas, falling back exhausted. The excitement of his son’s danger had nerved him for a little; now he felt a deathly weakness.

Samuel ran at the top of his speed toward his home, seated himself on the barn-yard fence, and hailed the house. Achilles appeared in his shirt-sleeves, greatly amazed, and very angry.

“What are you out there bawling like that for at this time in the morning, waking up mother? Where have you been?”

“Don’t come near me, Kill,” said Samuel, as

his brother advanced. "I've got the small-pox."

Achilles halted, but looked at Samuel as a fit candidate for an insane asylum.

"At least, I may have it on me," began Samuel; but here Mercy appeared. She had gone early into the room of her younger son, but finding the bed undisturbed, had become alarmed and hurried downstairs. To Achilles and his mother Samuel told his startling tale.

"He's a real nice-looking man, mother; he's a hospital nurse. He's a good man, too; he prays ever so much, and says texts when he's out of his mind. His name is Adam Clarke; I saw it in his Bible. I've been exposed all I can be, and he knows what to do. You had better give me things that I need, and I'll stay there at the cabin till he's well, and we're sure I don't catch it. I don't believe I will. But I might bring it home, if I came. Tish might get it, or Kill. Kill mustn't catch it, mother; who'd take care of you then? I'm not a bit afraid."

Mercy wrung her hands. "He ought to be carried to a pest-house."

"There is none in the county," said Achilles. "It would make a terrible scare. No one ever

goes near the cabin—it is on the corner of our own land now, you know. Perhaps the boy is right.”

“Yes, mother, don’t you be frightened. I’ll come every morning and every evening, regular, to this fence, and tell you just how I feel, and how I get on, and if I miss coming, even once, send Kill.”

“If he gets sick,” said Achilles, “I’ll make a room in the barn-loft, and nurse him there myself.”

“I know I shan’t get it,” said Samuel. “I’ll stay in the lower room most of the time, and I’ll burn tar, and sprinkle acid, and I’ll live on gruel, and drink cream-of-tartar water. I’ll be careful, and I don’t believe the man is going to die. He isn’t very thick out with it, only three or four on his face, but more on the rest of him.”

Mercy was crying bitterly over Samuel’s danger. Achilles put his arm around her.

“Cheer up, mamsey, Samuel will come out all right, and this poor man must not be left alone like a dog. He is some one’s son or husband, and our human relation, you know.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WORTH OF AN OLD COAT.

SAMUEL hurried back to his patient.

"So you have come," said the sick man. "I thought they would keep you. You told them?"

"Yes, of course. Mother was most awful scared, but Kill said it might as well go on, now it had begun, and he'd see to me. Kill said if I was going to catch it, likely I had, and it was no humanity leaving a sick one alone."

"What did—your father say?"

"Nothin'," replied Samuel calmly, "he wasn't at home."

The patient turned his face to the wall and groaned.

"Are you getting worse?" asked Samuel. "You'd better hurry up and take something, and tell me what to do with these things."

Thomas roused himself, and directed Samuel how to prepare the cream of tartar, and to warm up the gruel which Mercy had made. Then,

under his directions, Samuel hung all Thomas' clothing upon the bushes behind the house, fumigated them with burning tar, and left them there, exposed to wind, sun, and dew. He burned tar in the lower part of the hut, and sprinkled carbolic acid in the loft where Thomas lay.

Thomas ripped open his money-belt, and put the coins in an old tin can filled with water well tintured with carbolic acid. "That will disinfect them by the time I'm well," he said.

"I'm glad you've such a lot of money," said Samuel cordially. "I hate to have folks poor. It feels dreadful; I know, for once we were very poor. Now we are quite well off."

"How are you fixed downstairs?"

"First rate. I brought a quilt and a pillow for my hammock, and mother gave me plenty to eat. By the sun, it is most noon. Kill told me to take a bath in the brook every day. I'm going now to do it, and then I'll pick a lot of berries, and heat some gruel for my dinner."

"That's right. Mix some of that cream of tartar, and take a big swallow of it three times a day. Leave my part here by my bed, and that bottle of oil, so I can rub myself. I feel pretty sick, but I'm not having this hard at all.

I don't want you to come up here unless I call you, but if you can sit on the ladder and talk to me or read to me, I'd like it very much."

Without a particle of fear of the disease which most people so greatly dread, rather enjoying his independence and the free picnic-like life he was leading in glorious summer weather, Samuel passed pleasant days at the cabin. He enjoyed his nights in the hammock, when he swung himself to sleep, listening to crickets, katy-dids, owls, whip-poor-wills, and frogs, in a loud July chorus. When he awoke in the night, he felt the cool breeze playing about him, and saw, through empty doorway and sashless windows, the stars in the dark-blue sky. He enjoyed his bath in the brook, the daily gathering of blackberries, sassafras, and wintergreen; it was no end of fun to build a fire in the old fireplace, and make sage tea or heat gruel for his patient; it was delightful to go to the barn-yard, give a whoop, seat himself on the fence, and have the whole family come out to look at him, tell him news, and ask questions. As Patty grew better, Achilles carried her out into the garden, so that Samuel could behold her from afar. The whereabouts of Samuel and his present duties were scrupulously kept

secret by the family. Letitia begged and bought a few books for him, books which would serve to pass time pleasantly, and be burned in the end. Samuel spent days sitting on the ladder and reading these books to his patient. When it was too dark to read he repeated hymns, or chapters from the Bible, or told stories which he had read. He did not notice how his patient drew him on to speak of himself and his family. He told all about Patty, and his and Patty's work and play. He described Letitia and her beauty, and her wonderful learning.

"Why, she was a school-teacher; but some day," said Samuel shrewdly, "'Tishia will be married; no one has told me, but I know it. She will marry Philip Terhune, and go live on the Titus farm, where my mother was brought up. Philip is real nice; he owns that farm, and raises stock. Once Philip said, 'would I like to go live with him,' but I said 'No.' Kill needs me. I ought to be helping Kill this minute stump that field, we're going to put it in corn next spring. Besides, I'm going on to school, and after the High School I mean to go to college. I want to be a minister. It will take a long time, and I'll have to send myself through

mostly; earn my way, you know; but Kill says that won't hurt me, and Kill says it isn't well to start to preach too young, I won't know enough; he says preachers ought to have a lot of sense. I s'pose they ought. I'm fourteen; by seventeen I'll be through the High School, then I'll teach a year. Then I reckon, by I'm twenty-six, I can be made into a preacher. Twenty-six isn't so very old. Once I thought it was, but Kill will be that in less than five years, so it isn't old, after all."

This prattle comforted Thomas, and also cut him to the heart. O beautiful family life in which he could have no part; but what joy to think that his children were doing well and coming to honor and happiness in spite of his shameful fall, his ten years' sentence!

Amid all this he noticed that Samuel never mentioned a father. What was the man like? He had a morbid, growing anxiety to hear about him. Finally when Samuel had been about ten days living as nurse at the cabin, the boy said:

"When you get well, and we are sure I'm not going to catch it, you will come to our house, and stay three or four days, before you go—wherever you are going, Mr. Clarke; mother said

you must. You will like it; our house is nice, and so is mother, and Kill is splendid, and Letitia makes the best cookies! You'll come?"

"I—think not—I must hurry along as soon as I know that you are all right, and I think you will be," said "Mr. Clarke," who quietly accepted this title, knowing how Samuel came to bestow it upon him. But the boy was dissatisfied.

"You must come. Did you ever see our house?"

"I passed there—the night—I came here."

"Did you see the garden, and the porch, and the bay-window? Kill did all that. Of course we helped him; but if it hadn't been for Kill, I guess we wouldn't have got on. Kill has just worked like everything, for more than eight years. Why, our house was the worst-looking old place! No garden, broken old fence, no paint, no porch, just nothing! Kill set out all those trees and bushes, and built that fence, and did all the painting, and mended, and earned money. Kill has had our barn all built over, and fences made, and he's bought ten acres more, and got good fences. Why, I've built fence and stone wall, till I had awful back-aches many a time. Kill has kept me working like sixty, since

I was less than seven years old. But Kill says that don't hurt a boy, if he gets plenty of sleep, and good grub. It hasn't hurt me, and I've been to school right along. Mother worked, too. She has nursed some, and she has sewed for tailors, and taken in quilts and dresses. Our 'Tishia lived out for two years. She earned the plants, and most of our pigs and chickens, and our cow when it was little, and so on. But after two years 'Tishia went through the High School, and now she's a teacher, she gets thirty dollars a month. Kill worked out too, but now he has more land, and the horses and wagon, he works for himself. Uncle Barum gave Kill one horse when it was a colt, and Kill earned another, and raised 'em. Uncle Barum left mother forty dollars."

"Only forty dollars!" ejaculated Thomas; "wasn't he rich?"

"Well, sorter rich. But he got mad at mother once. They made up—only forgiving wasn't forgetting, and Uncle Barum left his money to the Terhunes. He gave mother his furniture and 'Tish his old coat, and me the things in my room and the horse and buggy. Then mother, she gave Kill her forty dollars to help on the

land, buying it, and I lent him my ninety dollars till I go to college, and Tish gave fifty that she saved up last year, and that was one hundred and eighty, so Kill is only in debt on the land and the wagon about sixty dollars."

Thomas made up his mind that he would send Kill the sixty dollars, and go forth in the world again, with fifteen dollars as his fortune. He must have some part in building up the fortunes of his family. But Samuel went on:

"Tish says she'll give Kill that sixty dollars, out of what she earns next year. I think we're getting on first-rate. You see we never waste a penny, and we are all of us earning a little all the time. Even Patty has earned two sheep and a turkey-cock, and two turkey hens, taking care of babies, and so on. Kill says if you can't make much, then be willing to make little, only make something."

"What is your father's name?" asked Thomas desperately.

"Thomas Stanhope," replied Samuel.

"I mean—your—other father."

"Haven't only one."

"Your mother's husband—your step-father."

"Why, what are you talking about?" cried

Samuel angrily. "My mother hasn't only one husband. You don't count she'd get married, do you, when my father is living?"

"Isn't—your mother—married again?" faltered Thomas.

"No, she isn't," shouted Samuel. "I guess you are going out of your head, Mr. Clarke, to talk like that."

"Well—you—said your father was away."

"So he is, but some time he is coming back."

"And when I passed the house the other night—I saw a man in there, reading a paper—and I thought it was your father."

Samuel began to laugh. "Why, land! Mr. Clarke, I guess that was Kill! A pretty father Kill would be for me! But he's big enough—he is as big as any man in the township, and Kill knows lots too."

But Thomas had rolled over on his face, and his frame was shaken with sobs. What! Mercy not married? Was it all a lie that she had received a divorce? Was he expected home some time? Did Mercy claim the name of Stanhope still?

Samuel heard the convulsive sounds. He was sitting on the ladder as usual, with his head just below the level of the floor. He raised himself a

step higher, and brought his curly head and his big eyes into the attic.

"What's the matter, Mr. Clarke? are you sick? are you worse?" and he clambered into the room.

"I'm all right. I—never felt better—I'm well—but I think I am nervous—I'll come round in a minute. Get me a drink, Samuel, a good drink from the spring."

From that minute new life came to Thomas. Life was once more worth living. He tried to lead Samuel to speak of his father, but here was a subject on which the loquacious boy had learned to be reticent; he always changed the conversation.

So one evening, after Samuel, sitting in the dusk on the ladder had recited a number of hymns and texts, Thomas Stanhope said, "Samuel, you said that with your Uncle Barum, forgiving was not forgetting. But God forgives and forgets. He casts our sins behind His back, and remembers them no more. Could you do like that?"

"Yes," said Samuel, "I think it is mean to forgive, and then be always remembering and casting it up."

"Could you forgive your father if he came back?"

"What do you know about my father?" said Samuel bluffly.

"If he came back ashamed and penitent, full of love for you all, a sinner forgiven for Christ's sake, anxious to try and do you all some good, would he be forgiven?"

"What are you talking like that for? Do you know my father?"

"Yes; I know him well. As well—as yourself. Samuel, will you forgive me and try and like me? I am your father."

"No, no, Mr. Clarke, you can't be!" cried Samuel coming near.

"But I am. I am not Mr. Clarke. You called me that, but that is our chaplain's name in the Bible. Has it never seemed to you as if you remembered me?"

Samuel had come up into the attic now. "No—you are not as I remember father; he was stouter, and his face and eyes were red, I think—but I can't remember. It is eight years and a half since I saw him. But father was not to get out for ten years!"

"Come here and take my hand, my boy. The

noisy, red-faced father you remember was a rum-demon. God has taken from me that dreadful thirst. I will tell you how I came out."

Then until the night was late, Thomas Stanhope told his son the story of his life. He told of his careless youth, his drifting into evil habits, his wicked years, his crime committed in a drunken frenzy, when he had, lured by a professional thief, broken into the express-office, and fired on the night clerk, happily only slightly wounding him. He told how repentance had come to him when he found himself a felon in a cell. He described his prison life, told of the letters that had ceased to come, of the strange letter of Uncle Barum, of his shortened sentence, of his saving the deputy's life and receiving his freedom. It was a long story, heard by Samuel with breathless interest.

"Oh, won't mother be glad!" he cried. "Mother and I have talked about you, and prayed for you, too. Dear me, how she will wonder to hear I have been taking care of my own father! Suppose we had had you sent off to some pest-house—only, as Kill said, there isn't any round here."

What pure joy filled the soul of Thomas as he

listened to his son! The boy's artless kindness came as balm to his aching heart.

Samuel, though voluble, was prudent; he had learned that at times silence is golden. He refrained from saying one word about what he knew to be the feelings of Achilles toward his prodigal father.

"If Kill's got anything hard to say, let him say it himself. I shan't help him out with it," he said.

Finally Thomas bade him go to his hammock. "In a day or two I shall be able to go down below and step out of doors," he said. "Pretty soon I may take stronger food. These pocks are nearly gone. I think, Samuel, you will not take it, after all."

Samuel went to his hammock and considered what he should do. He wisely concluded that it was safest not to do anything. Achilles had laid it down to him as a cardinal doctrine "not to stir things up." If he told his mother who this sick man was, it would surely "stir things up" in a lively fashion. Mercy might want at once to come and see him—and then, perhaps, there was still danger of infection. No, he would complete the month which Achilles had ordained as

proper quarantine. If by that time he and his patient were both entirely well, their clothing well fumigated and cleansed, ample disinfecting baths taken, Achilles had said that they might venture to the cottage. This opinion was guaranteed by Thomas out of his long experience as a nurse.

Those days that went by until the month was out were happy days. Thomas came down the ladder, sat in the door-way, walked about the cabin, went to the spring. In the evenings Samuel built a big fire of pine cones and pine needles and branches in the chimney-place, and he and his father sat before it and talked of the past and laid plans for the future. Mercy now sent more substantial food than gruel, and Samuel made toast, and boiled eggs, and baked potatoes, and roasted sweet corn, and found rich combs of bumble-bee honey, and brought them in to eat with the corn. When Achilles was at dinner for an hour, and after he left the field for the evening, or when he was away to help a neighbor, Samuel hastened to the field, and picked up stones, and built wall, and worked like a little hero.

Finally the month of probation was ended, and

Samuel announced one morning that that evening he should bring his patient to the house.

Mercy had provided Samuel with a fresh suit, telling him to leave his other changes of garments spread out on the grass near the cabin. Samuel had raided his chest in the barn and brought to his father shirt, socks, kerchiefs, shoes, necktie, that had been Uncle Barum's best.

Then finally, at sunset, the prodigal father and his faithful little son set off for the house; Thomas still thin, pale, and weak, and finding himself tremulous from excitement. He leaned on Samuel's shoulder, and they went slowly along. From the vine-shaded porch Achilles and Mercy watched them coming along the road. Something in that tall, broad-shouldered figure, with the slow step and bowed head, startled Mercy and sent the blood from her cheeks. Achilles the strong, his head erect, stood on the porch waiting for his guest. Samuel pushed open the gate crying "Mother! mother! this isn't Mr. Clarke at all. It is my father!"

But Thomas stopped at the gate—without the gate, his face raised now, his eyes fixed on the eyes of his first-born. And then great Nature—no, rather Nature's God, the Heart-moulder,

spoke to Achilles. With one bound he was at the gate; he had seized both hands of his penitent, prodigal father.

"Come in, come in, come home, here now, you are all right at last," and he led him to Mercy.

Unnoticed by the group on the porch where Letitia and Patty had run at Samuel's call, a phaeton passed along the road, and in it sat a gray-haired man. He saw this tender scene, and smiled, and glanced toward the wood-pile, where he and Achilles had sat one day, when Achilles had declined to be reckoned a Christian lest he might be expected to receive home his father!

"Our hearts are in His hands," said the minister, "and like rivers of water He turneth them whithersoever He will." He had all along known this Achilles better than he knew himself.

And so Thomas Stanhope was back after his long sentence, and his hard, but effectual schooling. He settled into the family life as if he had never been derelict to all duty. After he had told his story once, the past was dropped. He made Achilles take the sixty dollars and complete the payment on the land and wagon. There was a question of what he could do, for two men were not needed to till that little farm. Achilles the

strong, and the rigorously trained Samuel were enough. The field of Achilles answered the question of employment for Thomas.

"I can make brooms," said Thomas; "I can make the best brooms that ever went to market. If I have a shop-room, I could turn all that broom-corn of yours, Achilles, into brooms, and I could buy up all the broom-corn raised around here and send brooms to the city. I could build up a business."

And now had come Mercy's hour of supreme joy. She revealed her great secret. "I can build you a shop-room beside the barn and buy your tools. I have some money laid up with Friend Amos Lowell."

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One day, as the autumn grew chilly, Thomas Stanhope went into town with a small load of brooms to sell to Friend Amos.

When he came home he said: "It is growing cold, and as I had no overcoat I bought one. I went to that second-hand store, and found one that is faded and old-fashioned, but heavy and strong. I paid two dollars and a quarter for it."


“Why, let me look! How strange!” cried Letitia, “why, father, you have bought Uncle Barum’s old coat! The one he left to me. Well, I think there is a good deal of wear in it, and you will find it worth your two dollars and a quarter.”

CHAPTER XX.

THOUGH I FALL YET SHALL I RISE.

WHEN the return of Stanhope became known, there was a general feeling among his townspeople that friendly faces should be turned toward him. The former respectability of the Stanhope family was recalled; the wife and children of Thomas had won universal sympathy and regard in their struggle for a maintenance; people began to remember rather the amiable and pleasant boy, Thomas, than the idle and drunken man, Thomas. The circumstances of Thomas' release from prison had become well known. Mercy would have heard of them had it not been that Patty's fever had kept the neighbors away, and Achilles, following his usual plan of "not stirring up things," had hidden the newspapers.

But now Patty was quite well, there was no more danger of infection; the news of Stanhope's return spread, and friends and neighbors came



one by one, quietly, to give him a good word. As Friend Amos Lowell had been the first to respond to Stanhope's plea in behalf of his family, and the one to bid him good-by when he left, so now he was the first to greet him. Friend Amos and Friend Sara came in their buggy, and made a friendly call. As they went away Friend Amos said: "Thomas, if thee needs a hundred or two, to set thyself up in any occupation, I will gladly lend to thee. It is a true proverb that Satan finds mischief for idle hands."

"I do not mean to be idle," said Thomas. "I have thought of going about as a nurse, but, on the whole, I believe I will try my fortune at brooms. I will begin small, and see if my venture prospers. Mercy and Letitia can furnish what money I need for a start. You have done better than lend me money, Friend Amos, you have been the helper of all my family."

Judge Harry Noble came to see Thomas. "That was the hardest day's work I ever did, Thomas," he said, "to sentence an old comrade. I wished then that I had never reached the bench."

"It was the best thing that ever happened to me," said Stanhope. "Nothing else would have

cured me, and no other place would have been safe for me."


"That's a hard comment on our civilization," said the judge.

"So it is," said Stanhope; "the day will come when dram-selling will be as much out of fashion as dueling or assassination, and then the world will wonder that people could have permitted it, and called themselves civilized or enlightened. What is wanted is to put drinking itself—not merely what comes of drinking—in the code of offences against law."

"I don't know but it could properly head the long count of crimes," said Judge Noble.

So one after another came and gave a good word and a cordial hand-shake. Thomas Stanhope kept closely at his own home, except when he went to church. To be at home, to see the faces of his wife and children, to hear their voices, was joy enough.

Between the barn and the house, under a big apple-tree, they began to build a shop for making brooms. Achilles, Thomas, and Samuel worked upon it. Several of the neighbors came over and gave a day's work, so before long the shop was finished, and painted red with white door and



window casings, a chimney and a fire-place, and Mercy straightway planted hop-vines to clamber over it.

Many of the neighbors agreed to plant broom corn the next season; at present there was but little in the county, and Thomas could only make a beginning at his work; but when broom-making came to a stay for a time for want of material, Thomas went to the neighbors to pick fruit or husk corn, and then added to his broom-making the manufacture of corn-husk mats.

Samuel went to live with Friend Amos, and attend the High School in Ladbury, but often came home to spend Sunday. Letitia taught the mountain school, and Patience was one of her best pupils. It was the ambition of Patience to be "just like Letitia," and become a teacher. "Some day," she said to her sister, "after I go through the High School, and you are married, maybe I'll teach this school myself. I hope so."

"I may want it always for myself," said Letitia. "I may conclude never to get married."

"I think you will be dreadfully mean," said Patty, "not to marry Philip Terhune. Just think what long rides he takes to come out here and see you two or three times a week."

"I'm not twenty-one yet," said Letitia, "and it will be time enough to talk of marrying several years from now. I mean to lay up a nice little sum of money to help Samuel through college and through the theological school."

"Kill says that boys are much better off if they help themselves," said Patience; "he says it keeps them from being wasteful and trifling. Anyway, I heard Achilles tell father last night that before Uncle Barum died he told Achilles that he had for years planned to have you marry Philip, and that he did not want Achilles or any one to oppose it."

"Nonsense, child, don't repeat what you hear," said Letitia; "it is silly and not very honorable. Uncle Barum left me well provided, it seems; he left me Philip Terhune and the old coat! I wonder who is to wear the old coat, Philip or I?"

"Wasn't it funny," said Patty, "that Kill lost the coat the night he laid it over his horse before him, and some one found it, and sold it, and father bought it? It seems it is bound to come back to us."

"It is getting pretty shabby," said Letitia; "by next year I hope I can save up enough to buy father a new coat, and then I'll pack the old

one away in camphor, as a memento of poor Uncle Barum."

The days flowed by quietly at the Stanhope cottage. Philip made his regular visits, Samuel came home for holidays, Letitia was a model teacher; Mercy, Thomas, and Achilles worked like bees, first at one thing and then at another; and if Patty, by grace of all the rest, had a rather easier time of it than any of the other children had had, and more hair-ribbons and white aprons than had fallen to Letitia's share, no one was inclined to find fault, for Patty was the baby, the family darling, and such a delightful little girl.

"It all comes of her being loaned to me for two or three months," said Friend Amos, when Patty's virtues were discussed.

"Most of the good that we have, comes in some measure from you; you encouraged us and showed us a way, and you put heart into father. I remember what a sickly, unsmiling kid Patty was when you carried her off," said Achilles.

Friend Amos laughed. "I took her home, and she was well washed and fed and put to sleep," said he. "That was all easy, but the question was, what she should put on the next day. I

objected to brown, or gray, or black, for her. I thought children should be dressed in gay colors, like little flowers. I wanted her to wear a red dress and red boots. Sara inclined to dress her as a Friend's child, and not in vain colors, and was not unwilling to please me by keeping her in white—to match the lilies and the souls of young children. But white would have made too much work for Sara, and I told her the child was not to be ours, but to return home, and we were not bound to clothe her like Friends' children, and that God looked not on the outward appearance, but on the heart, and that He loves little children, and the babe would not be less dear to Him if she wore gay colors. Finally Sara gave me my way, and we went into the shop and chose a little pink gown, a pair of black boots, and a white apron. When Patience comes to live with us, and go through the High School, it will seem as if our own child came home. Whenever the child grows up, Mercy, and marries, thee knows that Sara and I will give her a good out-setting; but thee knows, too, that the property which the good Lord has given us will go to our nephews, for blood and religion must carry it when it comes to property."

"Good old Friend Amos," said Achilles, when he was gone; "he perhaps thought that we might have some crooked notions about his property; he heard Cousin Sacy Terhune make so many remarks about Uncle Barum's small possessions. She has not yet done wondering what Uncle Barum meant when he said to Letitia, 'You will find it if you look between——' When they tore down the cottage kitchen last week, she made sure the workmen would find a mint of money. But if they did, they kept it to themselves."

The second winter after Thomas Stanhope's return came. The broom business was thriving now. In the peace of home, the pure mountain air, the constant out-of-door activity, Thomas had lost the prison look, the trembling hands, the quivering lip, the restless eyes; he was robust and hale, though his hair was white and his shoulders were bowed.

It was the first of November. Philip Terhune had ridden over to take tea with Mercy and Letitia. Thomas came in from the shop with the old coat of Uncle Barum over his arm.

"See here, Letitia, your coat has come to trouble. It fell from the bench to the hearth, and

I did not see it until I smelled it scorching. The lining on the skirt is badly burned."


"Dear me," said Mercy, "it must have a piece put on it; you are going to Ladbury with brooms to-morrow."

Letitia meant to give her father a new coat for a Christmas present. She did not wish to forestall the joy of Christmas. Better to mend the old coat lining to do for a few weeks. She took it up.

"I will rip out this burned skirt lining, and to-morrow morning perhaps mother can put a new piece in; you have a breadth of coarse black alapaca that will do, mother."

Mercy was getting supper, and Letitia sat down to rip out the scorched lining. Philip was deeply interested in the affair, it seemed, for he thought that the lamp or the coat should be held for Letitia.

"Why, there's another lining in this coat, under the black one; a checked green flannel," said Letitia. "That was to make it warm, I fancy. The green one looks quite fresh and good." She ripped away vigorously. "Yes; this green lining is a full one, and the black one has just been put over it. Mother, I think if I rip out



all the black lining a good green one will be left."

"Let us do it," said Philip, "I think this ripping is the most interesting work I ever found."

Letitia ripped away. "I think I'll leave in the double sleeve-lining," she said. "Mother can hem it down in the morning."

One side and the back of the black lining came out, leaving an apparently new coat, as far as the lining was concerned.

"Now for the other side!" cried Philip; "it will be a dreadful sell, Letitia, if we find that all worn or burned out!"

"We can tell only by trying," said Letitia, as her scissors went snip, snip, snip, among the stitches. "Oh me! Philip! I believe you are right, here is a big patch, or something, on the breast. How queer! it is oil silk, double, sewed tight; a large piece, too."

"Let's have a look," said Philip. "Here goes for the black lining; that's not a mend, Letitia, it is a piece. How odd!"

The black flannel lining was pulled away, and there, smoothly and strongly sewed to the inter-lining, was a large doubled square of oiled silk.

Letitia in great haste ripped away. Presently an edge of white paper appeared.

"Let's have that," said Philip, and he pulled it out. On it was written: "This belongs to my grand-niece, Letitia Stanhope, of Ladbury." And meanwhile Letitia had ripped off the square of oiled silk, and there, neatly and firmly tacked to the old coat, were clean, nice bills.

"Come here, come here!" cried Philip, "Letitia has found a fortune! I know what Uncle Barum meant to say: 'Letitia, you will find if you look between the lining' of my old coat, some money, that I hid away for you. That was it. Well, you have your own, child. How much is it? You count, Achilles."

Letitia, pale and trembling with excitement, handed the bills to her brother. Achilles counted them calmly; he never allowed himself to be overwhelmed by good or by bad fortune. "Three thousand dollars!"

"Well, well, what a queer performance of Uncle Barum," said Samuel.

"Letitia, allow us all to congratulate you?" cried Philip.

"Won't Sacy Terhune be properly surprised," whispered Achilles to his mother a little later.

"But as Letitia is to marry Philip, I reckon Mrs. Terhune will console herself; the money won't be out of the Terhune family, and now her curiosity as to what Uncle Barum wanted to say will be satisfied."

"I'm glad enough it was Philip helped to find it," said Mercy. "I see how it was: after Uncle Barum saw Letitia, he put no more money into bonds for Sacy, but laid it up in bills for Letitia. I don't know as it was quite fair."

"It is fair for one to do as he likes with his own," said Achilles. "Uncle Barum earned the money, and he had a right to use it as he pleased, if he threw it into the pond. He wanted one of your children to profit by it, and he was fond of Philip, and wanted to keep faith with the Terhunes. I think he was pretty shrewd."

"He always was queer," said Mercy.

"Here's a letter on the floor," said the neat Patience, who was carefully picking up the burned black lining. "It is an old letter that has worked through some rip in the pocket. Why, it has never been unsealed!"

Her father took it from her hand. It was one of his own letters to Mercy, which Uncle Barum had sequestered, and lost between the linings of

his coat, thus forgetting to burn it. Certainly Uncle Barum was becoming childish when he intercepted that correspondence, and wrote his letter to Thomas. It was by finding this letter that the family finally were able to explain Uncle Barum's part in the correspondence mystery, and understand what he had said the day he died, about something that he had written.

Philip Terhune spent that night at his father's. The next day Sacy came out to the cottage, for the first time since Thomas Stanhope came home. She was very pleasant, asked numerous questions, and said nothing unkind. She even congratulated Letitia, and said the money had come to a good owner. As she went away she kissed "Cousin Mercy," and kissed Letitia.

"I hope," she said, "that you will agree to be married next summer; you can't tell how anxious I am about Philip, living over there at the farm with only hired people, and Madge and I cannot stay with him very much. I shall be quite comfortable when you are out there."

After that Sacy Terhune kept up friendly relations with the Stanhopes, and no one could offend her or Madge more grievously than by referring to Thomas Stanhope's past.

In fact, by that summer twenty years after Judge Noble pronounced that sentence, the summer when Judge Noble's son married Patience Stanhope, people seemed to have forgotten that the man who had honorably lived and labored among them for twelve years, had ever stood in the prisoner's box, or served out a ten years' sentence. When Achilles went to the state senate, and Samuel stood in the pulpit of his octogenarian pastor, no one thought of referring to the great shadows that had fallen on their father's past. But all about Ladbury, when any one wanted an instance in point, or an argument against the liquor traffic, it was only necessary to refer to Thomas Stanhope and his ten years' sentence.

THE END.



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